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CONTENTS.



	PAGE.
CHAPTER I.	
HOW MESSIRE JEHAN FROISSARD WAS INFORMED OF THE HISTORY WHICH WE ARE ABOUT TO RELATE,	25
CHAPTER II.	
HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON, ON THE ROAD BETWEEN PINCHEL AND COIMBRA MET A MOOR OF WHOM HE ASKED THE WAY, AND WHO PASSED ON WITHOUT REPLY,	32
CHAPTER III.	
HOW WITHOUT THE MOOR'S AID, THE KNIGHT, AGENOR DE MAULEON, FOUND COIMBRA AND THE PALACE OF DON FREDERICK, GRAND MASTER OF ST. JAGO,	36
CHAPTER IV.	
HOW MUSARON PERCEIVED THAT THE MOOR SPOKE TO HIS LITTER, AND THAT THE LITTER REPLIED,	42
CHAPTER V.	
THE PASSAGE OF THE RIVER,	50
CHAPTER VI.	
HOW MOTHRIEL ANTICIPATED THE GRAND MASTER WITH THE KING, DON PEDRO, OF CASTILE,	54
CHAPTER VII.	
HOW THE MOOR RELATED WHAT HAD PASSED TO THE KING, DON PEDRO, .	58
CHAPTER VIII.	
HOW THE GRAND MASTER ENTERED THE ALCAZAR OF SEVILLE, WHERE THE KING, DON PEDRO, WAS WAITING FOR HIM,	61
CHAPTER IX.	
HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON RECEIVED THE LETTER WHICH HE HAD COME IN QUEST OF,	64
CHAPTER X.	
HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON ENTERED THE CASTLE OF MEDINA SIDONIA, .	66

CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON WAS CHARGED BY BLANCHE OF BOURBON TO
DELIVER A RING TO THE QUEEN OF FRANCE, HER SISTER, . . . 69

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON LEFT FOR FRANCE, AND WHAT HAPPENED
TO HIM ON THE ROAD, 72

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE KNIGHT OF ARRAGON PURCHASED HIS RANSOM FOR TEN THOUSAND
GOLDEN CROWNS, 77

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON DELIVERED TO KING CHARLES V. THE RING
OF HIS SISTER-IN-LAW, QUEEN BLANCHE OF CASTILE, 79

CHAPTER XV.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON RETURNED TO THE CAPTAIN, HUGH DE CAV-
ERLEY, AND WHAT FOLLOWED, 86

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE CHIEFS OF THE GREAT COMPANIES PROMISED MESSIRE BERTRAND
DUGUESCLIN TO FOLLOW HIM TO THE END OF THE WORLD, IF HIS
GOOD PLEASURE WERE TO LEAD THEM THERE, 89

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW AGENOR FOUND HER WHOM HE WAS SEEKING, AND PRINCE HENRY HIM
WHOM HE WAS NOT LOOKING FOR, 92

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BLOODHOUND, 95

CHAPTER XIX.

LOVE, 98

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH IT WILL BE SEEN THAT MESSIRE BERTRAND DUGUESCLIN WAS A
NO LESS GOOD ARITHMETICIAN THAN A GREAT GENERAL, . . . 100

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH A POPE WILL BE SEEN TO PAY THE EXPENSES OF AN EXCOMMU-
NICATION, 102

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE POPE'S LEGATE CAME TO THE CAMP OF THE ADVENTURERS, AND
HOW HE WAS RECEIVED THERE, 106

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW HIS HOLINESS, POPE URBAN V., AT LAST DECIDED TO PAY THE CRUSADE
AND BLESS THE CRUSADERS, 108

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW MESSIRE HUGH DE CAVERLEY MISSED GAINING A HUNDRED THOUSAND
GOLDEN CROWNS, 111

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH WILL BE FOUND THE SEQUEL AND THE EXPLANATION OF THAT
WHICH PRECEDES, 114

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WILD BOAR TAKEN IN THE NET, 118

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE POLICY OF MESSIRE BERTRAND DUGUESCLIN, 120

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MESSENGER, 123

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CORONATION, 125

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW DON PEDRO ON HIS RETURN REMARKED THE LETTER, AND WHAT FOL-
LOWED THEREUPON, 131

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW MOTHRIIL WAS NAMED CHIEF OF THE MOORISH TRIBES, AND MINISTER
OF THE KING DON PEDRO, 133

CHAPTER XXXII.

OF WHAT PASSED BETWEEN AGENOR AND MUSARON, AS THEY JOURNEYED IN
THE SIERRA D'ARCAENA, 135

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW MUSARON FOUND A GROTTTO, AND WHAT THERE WAS IN THAT GROTTTO, . 138

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE GIPSIES, 139

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE QUEEN OF THE GIPSIES, 141

	PAGE.
CHAPTER XXXVI.	
HOW AGENOR AND THE FAIR UNKNOWN JOURNEYED TOGETHER, AND OF THE THINGS THEY SAID ON THE WAY,	143
CHAPTER XXXVII.	
THE VARLET,	145
CHAPTER XXXVIII.	
THE ORANGE BRANCH,	147
CHAPTER XXXII.	
THE AUDIENCE,	149
CHAPTER XL.	
THE RENDEZVOUS,	151
CHAPTER XLI.	
THE INTERVIEW,	155
CHAPTER XLII.	
THE PREPARATIONS FOR BATTLE,	157
CHAPTER XLIII.	
THE BATTLE,	159
CHAPTER XLIV.	
AFTER THE BATTLE,	161
CHAPTER XLV.	
FEMALE PLOTTING,	164
CHAPTER XLVI.	
THE TRUCE,	169
CHAPTER XLVII.	
THE JOURNEY,	171
CHAPTER XLVIII.	
MADAME TIPHAINE RAGUENEL,	172
CHAPTER XLIX.	
THE MESSENGER,	173
CHAPTER L.	
THE TWO MESSAGES,	174

CHAPTER LI.

THE RETURN, 176

CHAPTER LII.

RIANZARES, 177

CHAPTER LIII.

GILDAZ, 178

CHAPTER LIV.

OF THE MISSION OF HAFIZ, AND HOW HE FULFILLED IT, 179

CHAPTER LV.

HOW HAFIZ LED ASTRAY HIS TRAVELLING COMPANIONS, 182

CHAPTER LVI.

THE PATRIO OF THE SUMMER PALACE, 183

CHAPTER LVII.

EXPLANATION, 186

CHAPTER LVIII.

MARIA'S RING AND AISSA'S POIGNARD, 188

CHAPTER LIX.

THE PRISON OF THE GOOD CONSTABLE, 190

CHAPTER LX.

THE RANSOM, 192

CHAPTER LXI.

HOW, INSTEAD OF RESTORING A PRISONER, THE GOVERNOR LIBERATED A
WHOLE ARMY, 193

CHAPTER LXII.

THE POLICY OF MUSARON, 195

CHAPTER LXIII.

HOW THE CRIME OF MOTHRIIL HAPPILY SUCCEEDED, 196

CHAPTER LXIV.

HOW AGENOR DISCOVERED THAT HE HAD ARRIVED TOO LATE, 198

	PAGE.
CHAPTER LXV.	
THE PILGRIMS,	200
CHAPTER LXVI.	
THE CAVERN OF MONTIEL,	204
CHAPTER LXVII.	
HOW CAVERLEY LOST HIS PURSE AND AGENOR HIS SWORD,	206
CHAPTER LXVIII.	
HAFIZ,	208
CHAPTER LXIX.	
PREPARATIONS,	209
CHAPTER LXX.	
.	210
CHAPTER LXXI.	
AISSA,	213
CHAPTER LXXII.	
THE RUSE OF THE VANQUISHED,	218
CHAPTER LXXIII.	
THE ESCAPE,	220
CHAPTER LXXIV.	
DIFFICULTY,	221
CHAPTER LXXV.	
THE DIPLOMACY OF LOVE,	223
CHAPTER LXXVI.	
WHAT THEY SAW IN THE TENT OF THE BEGUE DE VILAINES,	224
CHAPTER LXXVII.	
THE RESOLUTION OF THE MOOR,	226
CHAPTER LXXVIII.	
THE HEAD AND THE HAND,	228
EPILOGUE,	229

THE IRON HAND;

OR, THE

KNIGHT OF MAULÉON.



CHAPTER I.

HOW MESSIRE JEHAN FROISSARD WAS INFORMED OF THE HISTORY WHICH WE ARE ABOUT TO RELATE.

THE traveller of the present day who passes through that part of the Bigorre which lies between the sources of the Gers and the Adour, and now constitutes the department of the Higher Pyrenees, has a choice of two roads to go from Tournai to Tarbes; one quite recently constructed,

and which crosses the plain, will take him in two hours to the ancient capital of the counts of Bigorre; the other which follows the mountain, and which is the remnant of an old Roman road, will take him a circuit of nine leagues. But this increase in his journey and in his fatigues will be amply compensated by the beautiful country which he traverses, by the view of the magnificent foreground offered by Bagnères, Montgaillard, and Lourdes, and by the horizon like a blue battlement formed by the mighty Pyrenees, in the midst of which, white with snow, springs up the

graceful *Pic du Midi*. This road is that of artists, poets, and antiquaries. It is therefore that on which we will beg our reader to cast his eyes.

In the first days of the month of March, 1338, about the commencement of the reign of Charles VI.; that is to say, when all those castles now levelled with the ground, uplifted the summit of their towers above the tops of the loftiest oaks, and the haughtiest pines, when those men of iron armour and hearts of steel, called Olivier de Clisson, Bertrand du Guesclin, and the Captal de Buch, had but just laid down in their Homeric tombs, after having begun that great *Iliad* of which a shepherdess* was to wind up the close, two men rode on horseback along that narrow and rugged road which then formed the only communication between the two principal cities of the south.

They were followed by two valets, who, like themselves, were on horseback.

The two masters appeared to be of about the same age that is, from fifty-five to fifty-eight years. But there all similarity ceased; for the great difference which existed between their costumes indicated that they followed different professions.

One who, from habit, no doubt, took the lead by half a horse's length, was clothed in a velvet surcoat, which had been crimson, but of which not only the gloss but the colour had changed, from the sun and rain to which it had so long been exposed, since its master first put it on. Through the openings of the surcoat passed out two nervous arms, covered with sleeves of buff leather, and making part of a doublet which had formerly been yellow, but which like the surcoat had lost its first gloss, not through exposure to the elements, but through rubbing against the cuirass to which it was evidently intended to serve as a lining. A helmet of the kind called basnets hanging for the moment, no doubt on account of the heat, to the horseman's saddlebow, allowed his bare head to be seen. It was bald at the top, but shaded on the temples and behind by falling locks of grey hair, which harmonised with moustaches darker than the hair, as is almost always seen in men who have undergone great labours, and a beard of the same colour as the moustaches, cut square, and falling over a steel gorget, the only part of defensive armour which the horseman had kept. As to his offensive weapons, they consisted of a long sword suspended by a broad leather belt, and by a little axe ending in a triangular blade fitted to serve alike with edge and point. This weapon was fastened to the right side of the saddlebow, so as to balance the helmet hanging to the left.

The second master; that is, the one who went a little in rear of the first, had on the other hand nothing warlike, either in his bearing or vesture. He was dressed in a long black gown, at the girdle of which, instead of sword or poinard, hung a shagreen inkstand, such as scholars and students then carried with them; his head, with sparkling and intelligent eyes, bushy eyebrows, a nose rounded at the tip, lips a little thick, hair spare and short, and bare of beard or moustache, was covered with a hood, as magistrates, clerks, and persons of the graver professions, then generally wore. From his pockets protruded rolls of parchment written over in that fine and close hand usual with those who write much. His horse even seemed to partake the pacific disposition of its rider, and with modest mien and subdued amble, its head inclined earthwards formed a con-

trast with the high step, foaming nostrils, and capricious neighings of the war-charger, which, as we have said, proud of its superiority, seemed to arrogate a precedence.

The two servants who followed exhibited the same opposition of character which prevailed between their masters. One was dressed in green cloth nearly after the manner of the English archers, bearing like them the bow slung, and the quiver on the right hand, while on the left, close to the thigh, hung a broad-bladed kind of dagger holding a mean between a knife and that terrible weapon then called a "bull's tongue." Behind him clattered, at every high step of his horse, the armour which the safety of the roads had allowed his master for an instant to lay aside.

The other, dressed like his master in black, appeared by the manner in which his hair was cut, and by the kind of tonsure perceptible on the top of his head, when he lifted his black cap, to belong to the lower class of the clergy. This opinion might be further confirmed by the sight of the missal which he held under his arm, and of which the silver corners and clasp of sufficiently skilful workmanship, remained brilliant in spite of the wear of the binding.

All four then rode on, the masters reflecting, the valets chattering, till, on arriving at a wider space where the road diverged into three branches, the knight reined in, and signing to his companion to do the like, "Look you," said he, "Maître Jehan. Cast a glance round the neighbouring country, and tell me what you think of it?"

He to whom this invitation was addressed, cast his eyes in all directions, and as the country was entirely waste, and by the character of the ground adapted to an ambushade—

"By my faith," said he, "Sir Espaing. this is a strange spot, and I declare, for my part, that I would not stop here even the time to say three *Paters* and three *Aves*, were I not in the company of a knight so renowned as yourself."

"Thanks for the compliment, Sire Jehan," said the knight, "therein I recognise your customary courtesy; recollect now what you told me three days ago, as we came out of the town of Pamiers, regarding that famous skirmish between the Montgat of Saint Basile, and Ernauton de St. Colombe, at the Pas de Larre."

"Oh, yes, I recollect," replied the churchman; "I told you to let me know when we came to the Pas de Larre, as I wished to see the spot which the death of so many brave men had made famous."

"Well, messire, you see it."

"I thought the Pas de Larre was in Bigorre."

"It is so, messire, and we also, since we forded the small river of Lège. It is now about a quarter of an hour since we passed on our left, the road of Lourdes and the castle of Montgaillard; below us you see the little village of Civitat, there is the wood of the Lord of Barbezan, and lower again you may see through the trees, the castle of Marcheras."

"Truly, Messire Espaing," said the churchman; "you know my curiosity concerning stout deeds of arms, and how I write them down as fast as I see them, or hear them told, that their memory may not be lost; tell me, then, if you please, in detail, what happened on this spot?"

"That is easy," replied the knight. "About 1358 or 1359, thirty years ago, all the garrisons of the country were French, that of Lourdes excepted. Now, this one made frequent sorties to revictual the town, carrying off all that it met with, and bearing all behind its walls, so that when it

* Referring to Jeanne d'Arc, who tended cattle.—*Translator.*

was known to have taken the field, all the other garrisons sent out detachments also in chase, and when a rencontre took place, terrible combats were waged, in which as fair deeds of arms were performed as ever adorned a set battle. One day the Mongat of Saint Basile, who was so termed because he was used to disguise himself as a monk when he led an ambuscade, sallied from Lourdes with the Lord of Carnillac and about a hundred and twenty lances. The citadel was in want of victual, and a great expedition had been resolved on. They rode on then till at length, in a meadow, but a league from the town of Toulouse, they found a herd of oxen which they drove off, and returned to the castle by the shortest road; but, instead of prudently following the road, they turned off to the right and the left, to carry off also a drove of pigs and a flock of sheep, which gave time for the rumour of the expedition to spread throughout the country. The first who learnt it, was a captain of Tarbes called Ernauton de Sainte Colombe. He left thereupon the care of his castle to a nephew of his, some say a bastard son, a young stripling of fifteen or sixteen, who had never yet borne hand in battle or skirmish. He hastened to apprise the Lord of Berroe, the Lord of Barbezan and all the squires of the Bigorre whom he could meet with, so that that very evening he found himself at the head of a troop about equal in strength to that of the Mongat of St. Basile, and to him was committed the entire command.

"Forthwith he sent his scouts through the country to learn by what road the garrison of Lourdes were to pass; and when he knew that it was to cross the Pas de Larre, he resolved to wait for it there. Consequently, knowing the country thoroughly, and his horses being untired, while, on the other hand, those of the enemy had made a four days march; he hastened to take post while the marauders halted about three leagues from the spot where he waited for them. As you have yourself said, the ground is fit for an ambuscade. The men of Lourdes, and the Mongat himself, hastened there unawares; and, as the flocks went first, these had already passed the spot where we now are, when, from the two branching roads, one to the right, the other to the left, the troops of Ernauton de St. Colombe came on at the gallop, with loud shouts; but it found itself well met; the Mongat was not a man to fly, he made his troop halt and waited for the shock. It was tremendous, and such as might be looked for from the encounter of the first men at arms in the country; but what above all served to infuriate the men of Lourdes was, that they were cut off from the droves, for which they had undergone so much fatigue and braved so many dangers, and which they heard lowing, grunting, and bleating under the guidance of their enemies' servants. These, thanks to the barrier interposed by their masters, had only had to fight herdsmen, who had not even resisted, for it mattered little to them, whether their cattle belonged to this side or that, since they no longer belonged to themselves.

"They had thus a double motive to overthrow their enemies; first that of their own safety, and then that of returning in possession of their victual, of which they knew their comrades in the citadel stood so much in need.

"The first encounter took place at the lance's point; but soon many of the lances were broken, and those who still retained them, finding a lance, in a space so shut in, but a sorry weapon, cast

them away, and seized their axes, their swords, or their clubs, or any weapon which fell under their hand, and then began the true mêlée, so fiery, so stern, and so desperate, that no man would yield a step, and that even those who fell, strove still to die in advance, so that it might not be said that they had lost the field of battle; and thus they fought for three hours, so that, as if by a common understanding, those who were too much worn out withdrew, and went to sit down behind their companions, whether in the wood, the meadow, or the edge of the ditch, took off their helmets, wiped away their blood or sweat, breathed themselves awhile, and then returned to the conflict more fierce than ever; so that, I do not think, there was ever battle more stoutly fought, both in assault and defence, since the famous Combat of the Thirty.

"During these three hours of hand to hand combat, chance so willed it, that the two leaders; that is, the Mongat of Saint Basile, and Ernauton de Sainte Colombe, had fought the one on the right, the other on the left. But both struck such strong and hearty blows, that the crowd by degrees opened before them, and they found themselves at last face to face. As that was what each of them wished, and as, since the beginning of the fight, they had not ceased defying each other, they shouted with joy as they met each other's glance, and as if their followers had understood that every conflict would be eclipsed by theirs, they cleared off, yielded ground, and the general action ceased, to give scope to this one struggle."

"Ah!" said the churchman, interrupting the knight, with a sigh, "why was I not there to see such a jousting, which must have recalled those bright days of chivalry, now passed, alas! never to return?"

"The fact is, Jehan," replied the warrior, "that you would have seen a fine and rare sight. For the two champions were men-at-arms, powerful in frame, and skilful in fence, mounted on strong and proud horses, which seemed as fiercely bent as their masters on rending each other to pieces; however, it was the horse of the Mongat de Sainte Basile which fell the first, being stretched dead on the spot by a blow with an axe, intended by Ernauton for its master. But the Mongat was too skilful, however rapid the fall, not to find time to loose his feet from the stirrups, so that he was last down, not under his horse, but by his side, and stretching out his arm, he cut through the fore fetlock of Ernauton's war-horse, which, neighing with pain, staggered and fell on its fore-knees; Ernauton lost his vantage, and was in his turn forced to dismount. Scarcely was he down, when the Mongat rose to his feet, and the combat recommenced. Ernauton striking with his axe, and the Mongat with his mace-at-arms.

"And it was on this very spot, that this noble deed of arms took place?" said the churchman, his eye sparkling with ardour as if he saw the combat which he heard described.

"On this very spot, Messire Jehan. And ten times over have eye-witnesses told me, what I now tell you. Ernauton was at the spot where you now stand, and the Mongat where I am; and the Mongat pressed so hard on Ernauton, that this last, while still defending himself, was forced to give way: and, as he fought, fell back from the stone which is between your horse's feet as far as that ditch, where doubtless he would have fallen backwards, when a young man who had arrived quite breathless during the combat, and who was looking on from the other side of the ditch, seeing the

good knight thus pressed, and perceiving that he had exhausted his strength, made but one bound as far as where Ernauton stood, and taking the axe which he was about to let fall from his hands, 'Ah! good uncle,' said he; 'give me your axe for awhile, and leave matters to me.'

"Ernauton asked nothing better; he let go the axe, and lay down on the borders of the ditch, when his valets ran to his help, and unlaced his armour, for he was ready to faint."

"But the young man," said the ecclesiastic; "the young man?"

"Well! the young man proved on that occasion that, bastard though he was termed, he had in his veins the true blood of his race, and that his uncle had done ill to shut him up in an old castle, instead of taking him with him; for scarcely had he axe in hand, than careless of having for his only covering, a cloth doublet, and on his head a velvet cap, while his enemy was cased in iron, he struck so hard a blow with the edge of his weapon on the top of his helmet that the vizor was cloven, and the Mongat quite stunned, staggered, and had almost fallen down. But he was too stout a man-at-arms to fall thus under a first blow. He rose again, raised in turn his mace, and struck at the youth, such a blow as would certainly have cloven his skull, had it reached him. But he, unencumbered by the weight of armour, slipped aside, and then springing on his adversary with the lightness and agility of a young tiger, he caught in his arms the Mongat tired with so long a contest, and bending him as the wind bends a tree, at last threw him down, while he called out—'Surrender, Mongat de Saint Basile, succoured or not succoured, otherwise you are a dead man.'"

"And then he surrendered?" asked the churchman, who took so great an interest in the narration that he seemed as it were to thrill with satisfaction through all his limbs.

"Not so," replied Messire Espaing, "but nobly and well replied—

"'Surrender to a child! I should be ashamed; strike if you can.'

"'Well then! surrender not to me but to my uncle, Ernauton de Saint Colombe, who is a brave knight, and not a boy like me.'

"'Not more to your uncle than yourself,' said the Mongat, in a low voice, 'for if you had not come, your uncle would now lie where I do. Strike then—for myself, on no account will I surrender.'

"'In that case,' said the young man, 'since you absolutely will not surrender, wait and we will see.'

"'Yes, let us see,' said the Mongat, making an effort like the giant Enecladus when he wishes to shake off Etna; 'let us see awhile.'

"But it was in vain that he rallied all his strength, that he encircled the young man with his arms and legs, as with a double ring of iron, he could not make him lose his vantage. This last remained the victor, holding his adversary under him with one hand, while with the other he drew from his belt a long thin-bladed knife, the point of which he slid under the gorget. At the same moment, a dull rattle was heard. The Mongat struggled, stiffened, rose up, but without shaking off the young man who still pressed to him and continued to push his knife; at last a froth of blood spouted through the vizor of the Mongat's helmet and trickled down the face of his adversary. The almost superhuman efforts of the fallen man revealed the convulsions of approaching death. But no more than he had hitherto yielded, did the youth let him go; he appeared bound to all his movements. Like the serpent winding round the body of the victim

whom it stifles, he rose up, relaxed, or stiffened as he did, trembled with his every tremor, and remained crouched and extended until the last tremor was extinct, and the rattle had died in a groan.

"Then he arose, wiping his face with the sleeve of his doublet, and with the other, shaking the little knife, which seemed but a child's plaything, and which yet had but just put a man to so cruel a death."

"God's truth," said the ecclesiastic, forgetting that his enthusiasm led him to swear, you will tell me the name of that young man, will you not, Sire Espaing de Lyon, so that I might write it down on my tablets, and endeavour to engrave it in the annals of history?"

"He was called the Bastard Agénor de Mauleon," replied the knight, "and you may, as you say, write down that name at full length on your tablets, Messire Jehan; for it is that of a stout man-at-arms who well deserves that honour."

"But," said the abbot, "without doubt he did not stop there; he must have done in his lifetime some other feats worthy to take place by that with which he begun."

"Oh! most certainly; for three or four years afterwards he left for Spain, where he remained for four or five years fighting against the Moors and Saracens, and whence he returned with his right wrist cut off."

"Oh!" said the churchman, in a tone which showed the interest he took in the conqueror of the Mongat de Saint Basile; "that was indeed unfortunate, since no doubt it must have compelled the brave knight to renounce the use of arms."

"Not so," replied Messire Espaing de Lyon, "not so; you are, on the contrary, much mistaken, Messire Jehan; for instead of the hand he had lost, he made himself a hand of iron with which he bore a lance quite as well as with a real hand. Besides that, he can, when it pleases him, wield with it an iron mace with which he strikes as it seems in such wise, that from his blows there is no recovery."

"And," asked the ecclesiastic, "may I know on what occasion he lost that hand?"

"Ah!" said Messire Espaing, "that is more than I can tell you, whatever wish I may feel to please you. For I do not personally know the brave knight of whom we speak, and I have even been assured that those who know him are as ignorant on the subject as myself; he has never been willing to tell that part of his history to any one."

"Then," said the churchman, 'I will in no wise speak of your bastard, Messire Espaing; for I do not wish that those who read the history which I am writing, should ask the same question as myself, without meeting any answer.'

"Nay," said Messire Espaing, "I will ask, I will try to learn; but begin in any case to mourn your loss, Messire Jehan; for I doubt you will never learn anything of what you wish to know, unless from himself, should you chance to meet him."

"Is he then still alive?"

"Certainly, and fighting more than ever."

"With his iron hand?"

"With his iron hand."

"Ah!" said Messire Jehan, "I think I would give my abbey to meet that man, and get him to tell me his history; but at least finish yours, Messire Espaing, and tell me what became of the two parties, when the Mongat was dead?"

"The death of the Mongat ended the battle. What the knights wished for were the flocks that

had been carried off and they had them. Besides, the Mongat being dead, they knew that the famous and much-dreaded garrison of Lourdes was far less formidable, for it is often a single man who makes the strength of a garrison, or of an army. It was, therefore, agreed that each party should carry away its wounded and prisoners, and that the dead should be buried. They carried away, then, Ernauton de St. Colombe covered with bruises received in the fight; the dead were buried where we stand, on the spot our horses tread under foot. And that so brave a comrade as the Mongat might not be confounded with vulgar corpses, they hollowed a ditch on the other side of that great rock which you see about four steps from us, with a stone cross and his name upon it, so that pilgrims, travellers, and valiant knights might, as they passed, say a prayer for the repose of his soul."

"Let us go, then, towards this cross, Messire Espaing," said the abbot; "as for my part I shall be very willing to say there a *Paternoster* an *Ave-Maria*, and a *De Profundis*."

Then giving the example to the knight, the abbot signed to the attendants to come near, flung his horse's bridle to his valet, and alighted with an impatience which showed that in such matters, the good chronicler was relieved of half the weight of years.

Messire Espaing de Lyon did the same, and both went on foot to the spot indicated. But as they turned the rock both stopped short.

A knight, of whose presence they now first became aware, knelt down before the cross. He was wrapped in a large mantle which, by the stiffness of its folds indicated that a complete suit of armour lay underneath. His head alone remained bare, his helmet was on the ground, while ten steps in the rear, masked also by the rock, stood an esquire in war armour, mounted on a charger, and holding the horse of his master, likewise in harness of battle.

The knight was a man in the full prime of life; that is, from forty-six to forty-eight years of age, with the brown complexion of a Moreno, thick hair, and a bushy beard. Both hair and beard were dark as a raven's wing.

The two travellers stopped an instant to contemplate that man who, motionless as a statue, was performing at the tomb of the Mongat the same pious duty which they had come to fulfil themselves.

On his part, the unknown knight, while his prayer lasted, appeared to pay no attention to the new comers; then his prayer being finished, he made, and to the great astonishment of the two witnesses, with his left hand, the sign of the cross, gave a courteous bow, replaced his helmet on his sunburnt forehead, and wrapped always in his mantle, remounted, turned the angle of the rock, followed by his squire, even more dry, stiff, and embrowned than himself, and rode off.

Although at that time many such persons might be met with, yet there was something in this of so peculiar a character that both travellers remarked it, but each in his own mind only: for time was beginning to press; three leagues were yet to be traversed, and the ecclesiastic had made the engagement to say, at the grave of the Mongat, a *Paternoster*, an *Ave-Maria*, a *De Profundis et Fideium*.

The prayer over, Messire Jehan looked round him. The knight who, doubtless, knew nothing more than himself, had left him alone; he made, therefore, in his turn, the sign of the cross, but

with his right hand, and went to rejoin his companion.

"Eh?" said he to the two servants, "have you not seen a knight, in war-harness, followed by his squire, the knight seeming to be about forty-six years of age, the squire, fifty-five or sixty?"

"I have already inquired, messire," said, with a sign of the head, Espaing de Lyon, who had experienced the same curiosity as his travelling companion. "He appears to follow the same road as ourselves; and, like ourselves, no doubt, will sleep at Tarbes."

"Let us, then, trot on to rejoin him, if it please you, Messire Espaing," said the chronicler; "for perhaps if we overtake him, he will speak with us, as is customary with persons who follow the same road. And, methinks, that there would many things to learn in the company of a man who has seen a sun hot enough so to darken his colour."

"Let us do, then, as you wish, messire," said the knight, "for I confess that I feel a curiosity not less keen than yours; although, in these cantons, I never recollect having hitherto seen that face in the country."

Consequently on this resolution, our travellers went on at a more rapid step, their horses, however, still keeping the same distance, that of the knight being always a little in advance of that of the churchman. But it was uselessly that they hastened the pace of their beasts. The road which had become wider and finer as it skirted the river of Lisse, gave equal facility to the unknown and his squire to double their speed, and the travellers arrived at the gates of Tarbes, without having overtaken the object of their curiosity. Once arrived there, quite a new solicitude took possession of the churchman.

"Messire," said he, to the knight, "you know that the first need of a traveller is a good resting place and a good supper. Where are we to lodge, if you please, in this town of Tarbes, where I know no one, and where I come for the first time, having been sent for, as you well know, by Monseigneur Gaston Phœbus?"

"Be not anxious, messire," said the knight, smiling; "with your good pleasure we will lodge at the Star, 'tis the best hostelry in the town, without mentioning that the host is a friend of mine."

"Good!" said the chronicler, "I have always remarked that on a journey there are two sorts of persons whom one should have for friends, those who fleece in the town and those who fleece in the forest—innkeepers and thieves. Let us go, then, to your friend, the host of the Star, and you will give me your recommendation to him, against my next return."

Both then went on to the inn mentioned, which was in the market-place of the town, and enjoyed, as Messire Espaing de Lyon said, a great reputation in a circuit of ten leagues.

The host was on the threshold of his door, where, much descending from his aristocratic habits, he was employed in plucking with his own hands a splendid pheasant, to which he left, however, with a gastronomic scrupulosity, which only epicures can appreciate who wish to enjoy not only the pleasures of taste and smell but also those of sight, the feathers of its head and tail; but before being totally absorbed in this important occupation, he perceived Messire Espaing de Lyon at the moment he arrived on the place, and putting the pheasant under his left arm, while he uncapped with the right, he advanced a few steps to meet him.

"Ah! 'tis you, Messire Espaing," said he with the liveliest display of joy; "welcome to you and your honourable company; 't is many a long day since I have seen you, and I feared it might be a long while still before you passed through our town, eh? Brin d'Avoine, take the horses of these gentlemen. Ho! Marion, make ready the best rooms; gentlemen, alight if you please, and honour my poor hostelry with your presence."

"Well," said the knight to his companion, "did I not tell you, Messire Jehan, that Master Barnaby was a rare man, and that one could find in his house at a moment's notice, all one might have need of."

"Yes," said the churchman, "and I have nothing to object to as yet, but that I have heard only of stables and rooms, and not a word of supper."

"Oh! as to supper, your lordship may be at ease," said the innkeeper. Messire Espaing will tell you that I am only reproached on one account—that of furnishing my travelers with too plentiful meals."

"Come, come, Master Gascon," replied Messire Espaing who, like his companion, had dismounted and flung his horse's bridle to the valets, "show us our way, and only give us half what you promise, and we shall be satisfied."

"Half," cried Master Barnaby, "half! why I should quite lose my character if I acted thus; twice what I promise, Messire Espaing, twice as much!"

The knight gave a glance of satisfaction to the churchman, and both following the innkeeper's steps, entered the kitchen after him.

In fact, everything in this well-replenished kitchen gave a foretaste of that happiness which, for your true feeders, results from a well-ordered and well-served repast. The spit was turning—the stewpans singing—the gridirons hissing—and, in the midst of all this noise, like an harmonious summons to table, the clock struck six.

The knight rubbed his hands, and the chronicler licked his lips. Chroniclers are in general great epicures, but it is much worse when, beside being chroniclers, they are also churchmen.

At this moment, and while the looks of the two new comers, starting from the same point, that is, from the spit, were making a circuit round the room, to assure themselves that the promised enjoyments were quite substantial, and would not escape them like those fairy viands promised by wicked enchanters to the ancient knight-errants, an ostler made his appearance in the kitchen, and whispered in the innkeeper's ear.

"Ah! the devil," said this last, scratching his ear; "and so you say there is no place in the stables for these gentlemen's horses?"

"Not the smallest, master; the knight who has just arrived, has taken the two last; not of the stable, for that was already full, but of the out-house."

"Oh! oh!" said Messire Espaing; "we shall find it inconvenient to separate from our horses, but if you have really no place here, we consent in order not to lose the good rooms which you promise us, that they shall go with our servants to some other part of the town."

"In that case," said Master Barnaby, "I can suit you, and your horses will gain by the change; for they shall be lodged in stables to which the Count of Foin has nothing similar."

"These magnificent stables must serve our turn then," said Messire Espaing; "but to-morrow morning, mind, the horses must be at your door by six o'clock and ready saddled; for Messire

Jehan and myself are going to the town of Pau, where Messire Gascon Phœbus is awaiting us."

"Be at your ease," replied Master Barnaby; "and rely on my word."

At that moment the chambermaid came in and whispered in mine host's ear, whose face immediately put on an appearance of perplexity.

"Well then! what is it now?" asked Messire Espaing,

"'Tis not possible," replied the innkeeper; and he held out his ear again for the chambermaid to repeat her whisper.

"What does she say?" asked the knight.

"She says what is incredible."

"Well, what is it?"

"That there are no more rooms."

"Good," said Messire Jehan; "here we are sentenced to go and sleep with our horses."

"Oh! gentlemen, gentlemen," cried Barnaby; "how many excuses I owe you; but the knight who has just arrived, a little before you, has taken for himself and his squire, the only two rooms which remained."

"Bah!" said Messire Jehan, who appeared accustomed to such disappointments; "a bad night is soon passed, provided we have a good supper."

"See," said the innkeeper; "here is the head cook, whom I have just sent for."

The head cook drew the landlord aside, and began a conversation with him in a whisper.

"Oh!" said the landlord, making an effort to look pale, "'tis impossible."

The head cook made a gesture with his head and hands, as if to say, "So it is."

The churchman, who seemed perfectly to comprehend the vocabulary of signs, when this vocabulary referred to the kitchen, really grew pale.

"Heyday," said he, "what is it now?"

"Gentlemen," replied mine host, "it is Mariton who has made a mistake."

"And in what is he mistaken?"

"In having informed me that he has not wherewith to provide supper for you, as the knight who has just come has bespoke all that remains of the provisions for himself."

"Look you, Master Barnaby," said Messire Espaing de Lyon, knitting his brow, "no jesting if you please."

"Alas! messire," said the innkeeper, "I beg you to believe that there is not the least jesting in the case, and that I cannot be more sorry than I am for your disappointment."

"I admit that all you say regarding stables and rooms may be right," replied the knight; "but as to supper, 'tis quite another affair, and I assure you I am not to be put off thus. There is a whole range of stew-pans."

"Messire, it is intended for the Castellan of Ma-cheras, who is here with his lady."

"And that capon turning on the spit?"

"It is bespoke by a fat canon of Carcassonne, who is going to rejoin his chapter, and who only eats flesh one day in the week."

"And that gridiron laden with cutlets, which gives forth so savoury a smell?"

"Those, with the pheasant, which I am now plucking, are for the supper of the knight, who arrived an instant before you."

"So then," said Messire Espaing, "it seems that this devil of a knight has taken everything? Master Barnaby, do me the favour to go and tell him that a fasting knight proposes to break a lance with him, not for the bright eyes of his lady, but for the good savour of his supper; and you will add that Messire Jehan Froissard, the chronicler, shall be

judge of the lists, and shall register our feats and exploits."

"There is no need of that, messire," said a voice behind Master Barnaby, "as I come on my master's behalf to invite both you, Messire Espaing de Lyon, and you, Messire Jehan Froissard, to sup with him."

Messire Espaing turned round on hearing the voice, and recognised the squire of the unknown knight.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "here is, it seems, a most courteous invitation. What say you, Messire Jehan?"

"Not only that it is most courteous, but that it comes very much in season."

"And what is the name of your master, my friend, that we may know to whom we are indebted for so much politeness?" asked Espaing de Lyon.

"He will tell you himself, if you will be so good as to follow me," replied the squire.

The travellers looked at each other, and, as partly from hunger, partly from curiosity, both felt the same wish.

"Go on, then," they both said at the same time, "show us the way, and we will follow."

Both mounted the staircase behind the squire, who opened the door of a room, at the bottom of which stood the unknown knight, who, with his armour laid aside, appeared in a black velvet gown with long and wide sleeves, and holding his hands behind his back.

On perceiving them, he advanced a few steps, and, with a courteous salute, "Welcome, gentlemen," said he, presenting his left hand, "and receive all the thanks which I owe you, for having consented to accept my invitation."

The knight had so honourable and open a countenance; the hand which he put forward appeared offered with so much frankness, that both accepted it, although it was an almost absolute custom among knights only to offer the right hand, and almost an insult to present the other. However, the two travellers, while they returned to the unknown knight this singular mark of politeness, could not sufficiently master their surprise to prevent its appearing on their countenance; but the knight did not appear to remark it.

"It is we, messire," said Froissard, "who owe you thanks; for we were in great perplexity, when your kind invitation came to our relief. Accept then, our very hearty acknowledgments."

"Nay, I have more to say," said the knight, "as I have two rooms, and you are unprovided, I will give you that intended for my squire."

"Truly," said Espaing de Lyon, "you are too kind; but where, then, will your squire sleep?"

"In my room, perdie!"

"Not so," said Froissard, "that would be presuming too much."

"Bah!" said the knight, "we are accustomed to that; it is now twenty-five years, since we first slept under the same tent, and during those twenty-five years it has so often happened, that we have no longer numbered the occasions. But, be seated gentlemen," and the knight, pointing out to the travellers chairs placed round a table on which stood glasses and a flagon, set them the example by taking a seat himself.

The two travellers then, in their turn, sat down.

"Well, then, it's a thing agreed on," said the unknown knight, filling up three glasses of hyposcras, and making use for this of the left hand, as he had done hitherto.

"In faith, yes," said Espaing de Lyon, "and we think we should insult you, sir knight, did we refuse so cordial an offer. Are you not of the same opinion, Messire Jehan?"

"So much the more," replied the treasurer of Chimay, "that the inconvenience we may cause you will not be of long duration."

How so?" asked the unknown knight.

"We leave to-morrow for Pau."

"Truly," said the knight, "one knows when one arrives; one knows not when one may leave."

"We are expected at the court of Count Gaston Phœbus."

"And nothing would seem to you of interest enough to detain you a week on the road?" asked the knight.

"Nothing but a very curious and very interesting history," answered Espaing de Lyon.

"Even, in that case," said the chronicler, "I know not how I could break my word to Monseigneur the Count of Foix."

"Messire Jehan Froissard," said the knight, "you said but just now at the Pas de Larre, that you would give your abbey of Chimay to him who would tell you the adventures of the Bastard of Mauléon."

"Yes, certainly, I said so; but how do you know it?"

"You forget that I was saying an *Ave* on the tomb of the Mongat, and that from where I was I could hear every word you said."

"See what it is to speak on the high road, Messire Jehan Froissard," said, with a laugh, Espaing de Lyon. "These words will cost you your abbey."

"By the mass! sir knight," said Froissard, "I guess that I have fallen on a lucky moment, and that you know this history."

"You are not deceived," said the knight, "and no one knows, or can tell it you better than I, from the time he killed the Mongat of Lourdes, to that at which his hand was cut off."

"And what will it cost me?" said Froissard, who, in spite of the curiosity which he had felt to hear this history, began to regret that he had pledged his abbey.

"It will cost you a week, sir abbot," replied the unknown knight; "and even then, it will be difficult for you, during that week, to write down on parchment all that I may dictate to you."

"I thought," said Froissard, "that the Bastard of Mauléon had sworn never to let this history be known?"

"Not until he had found a chronicler worthy to record it; and now, Messire Jehan, he has no longer reason to conceal it."

"In that case," said Froissard, "why not write it yourself?"

"Because there is a great obstacle to my doing so," said the knight, with a smile.

"What is that?" asked Messire Espaing de Lyon.

"This is it," said the knight, raising his right sleeve with his left hand, and placing on the table a mutilated arm, ended by an iron hook.

"Jesus!" said Froissard, trembling with joy, "can you be —"

"The Bastard of Mauléon in person, whom others call also Agénor, with the iron hand."

"And you will tell me your history?" asked Froissard, with the eagerness of hope.

"As soon as we have supped," said the knight.

"Good," said Froissard, rubbing his hands; "you spoke truth, Messire Espaing de Lyon. Monseigneur Gaston Phœbus must wait."

And that very evening, after supper, the Bastard of Mauléon, in conformity with his promise, began to relate to Messire Jehan Froissard, the history which our reader has now before him, and which we have taken from an unedited manuscript, without taking any other pains, as is our custom, than that of changing to the third person singular, a narrative written in the first.

CHAPTER II.

NOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON, ON THE ROAD BETWEEN PINCHEL AND COIMBRA MET A MOOR OF WHOM HE ASKED THE WAY, AND WHO PASSED ON WITHOUT REPLY.

On a fine morning in the month of June, 1361, one fearless of trusting himself in the plains under a heat of more than a hundred and ten degrees, might have seen advancing on the road from Pinchel to Coimbra, in Portugal, a figure which the men of our day will not feel averse to hear described.

It was not a man, but a complete suit of arms, composed of a helmet, brassards and cuishes, with lance on arm, a target round its neck, and the whole crowned with a plume of red feathers, above which rose the point of the lance.

This armour was balanced on a horse, of which naught was perceptible but its black legs and glowing eye; for, like its master, it disappeared under its war harness, covered by a white housing, ribbed with red cloth. From time to time the noble animal shook its head, and neighed even more with rage than pain, whenever some fly had succeeded in getting under its heavy trappings and made its greedy bite felt.

As to the horseman, as stiff and firm on his stirrups as if he had been rivetted to the saddle, he seemed to take pride in braving the ardent heat which fell from that copper sky, inflaming the air, and drying up the grass. Many whom none on that account would have been accused of being delicate, would have allowed themselves to lift the barred vizor which changed the inside of the helmet into a stove; but, by the inflexible demeanour and generous immobility of the knight, one might see that he could exhibit, even in the desert, the vigour of his constitution, and his power of enduring all the hardships of a soldier's life.

We have said the desert, and in fact the country through which the knight was taking his way, well deserved that name. It was a species of valley, just sufficiently deep to concentrate on the road which the knight was following, all the rays of a burning sun. For more than two hours already the heat felt there was so great, that it had lost its most assiduous frequenters; the shepherds and flocks, who, morning and evening appeared on its double slope, to look for some blades of parched and yellow grass, had taken refuge behind the hedges and bushes, and slept in the shade. As far as the eye could reach, one might vainly seek a traveller sufficiently bold, or rather insensible enough to heat, to traverse a soil which seemed composed of the ashes of rocks calcined by the sun. The only living animal, who proved that animated beings could live in such a furnace, was the cricket, or rather the thousands of crickets, who bulwarked between pebbles, clinging to the blades of grass, or basking on some olive branch, white with dust, gave forth their shrill and monotonous sound; it was their triumphal song, and announced the conquest of the desert, where they reigned as sole and undisputed sovereigns.

We were wrong, however, in asserting that eye would have vainly sought another traveller around the horizon, than the one we have errored to describe, for a hundred steps behind him, walked a second figure not less singular than the first, although of quite a different character: it was a man of about thirty, dry, bent, sunburnt, and rather lying over than seated, on a horse as meagre as himself. He was sleeping on the saddle, by which he held fast with his hands, and evidently not troubled with any of those cares which kept his companion awake, not even that of knowing the road he went, for which he evidently depended on one better informed and more interested than himself, in not being misled.

However, the knight tired at last, no doubt, with carrying his lance so high, and bearing himself so stiffly in the saddle, halted to raise his vizor, and thus to give passage to the boiling vapour which had begun to ascend through his iron covering up to his head; but before executing this movement, he flung his eyes round him, like a man who appears not the least inclined to think courage less estimable because accompanied with a suitable amount of discretion.

It was in this movement of rotation, that he saw his careless companion, and looking attentively he perceived that he was asleep.

"Musaron," cried the iron-clad horseman, having first raised the vizor of his helmet; "Musaron, awake, or by the precious blood of Saint Jago! as the Spaniards say, you will not arrive at Coimbra with my valise, whether you lose it on the way, or that it is stolen by thieves. Musaron! but will you always sleep, fellow?"

But the squire—for such was the office filled near the cavalier's person—by him whom he addressed; the squire, we say, slept too fast for the sound of a voice alone to wake him; the knight perceived therefore that some stronger means must be employed, the more so as the sleeper's horse, seeing that his leader had stopped had thought proper to stop also, so that Musaron having passed from motion to immobility, had only a better chance to enjoy a deeper sleep; he then unfastened a little ivory horn, crusted with gold, which was suspended to his girdle, and approaching it to his mouth, he gave, with a strong breath, two or three notes which made his horse rear and that of his companion neigh.

This time Musaron awoke with a bound.

"Halloo!" cried he, drawing a sort of cutlass, fastened round his waist; "halloo! what do you want, thieves? halloo! what do you ask, gipsies, devils! grandchildren? Make off, or I will cut and split you down to the midriff."

And the brave squire began to lay about him, right and left, until, perceiving that he was only belabouring the air, he stopped, and looking on his master with an air of astonishment—"Eh! what is it?" said he, Messire Agénor, opening his astonished eyes; "where are these folks who are attacking us? have they vanished like a vapour? or have I destroyed them, before being quite awake?"

"The fact is," said the knight, "that you are dreaming, and that while you dream you let my shield drag at the end of its strop, which is dishonouring to the arms of an honourable knight. Come, come—wake up altogether, or I shall break my lance over your shoulders."

Musaron shook his head in rather an impertinent fashion.

"On my faith, Sir Agénor" said he, "you will do well, and by that means we shall have one lance



at least broken during our journey. Instead of opposing this project, I therefore invite you with all my heart to put it into execution."

"What do you mean?" said the knight.

"I mean," said the squire, still drawing nearer with his merry carelessness, "that during the sixteen long days which we have now ridden in Spain, that land so full of adventures, as you said on setting out for it, we have hitherto met no other enemy than sun and flies, and no other booty than swellings on our limbs and dust. Plague on't, Sir Agénor, I am hungry; plague on't, Sir Agénor, I am thirsty; plague on't, Sir Agénor, my purse is empty; that is, I am a prey to the three greatest calamities in this world; and that I see no sign of those great pillagings of infidel Moors with which you feasted my ears, which were to enrich our bodies and save our souls, and on which I had made beforehand such sweet dreams, down in our fine country of Bigorre before I was your squire, and above all, before I am so."

"Would you, perchance, presume to complain when I hold my peace?"

"I should have some reason, Sir Agénor, and in fact, it is only boldness that I want. Almost our very last franc has been expended among those armourers of Pinchel, who have ground your axe, sharpened your sword, and polished your armour; and truly nothing more is wanted than a rencontre with brigands."

"Coward!"

"One moment! Let us understand each other, Sir Agénor. I don't say that I fear it."

"What then do you mean to say?"

"I say that I desire it."

"Why?"

"Because we should rob the thieves," said Musaron, with the sarcastic smile which made the principal character of his physiognomy.

The knight raised his lance with the very visible intention of letting it fall on the shoulders of his squire, who had come sufficiently near to give him

a good opportunity for that kind of chastisement; but this last, with a motion full of address which seemed familiar to him, evaded the blow, while he held up the lance with his hand.

"Take care, Sir Agénor," said he, "and don't let us jest in this fashion; I have hard bones and very little flesh upon them. A misfortune soon happens; one false stroke, and you would break your lance, and we should be obliged to repair the wood ourselves, or to present ourselves before Don Frederick with an incomplete equipment, which would be a disparagement to the honour of the chivalry of Béarn."

"Hold your tongue, cursed babbler! You would do much better, if you must absolutely talk, to mount that hill and tell me what you see from the top."

"Ah!" said Musaron, "if it were that to which Satan transported our Lord, and if I found any one there, were it the devil in his own person, who, on condition that I kissed his hoof, offered me all the kingdoms of this world—"

"You would accept, renegado?"

"With gratitude, sir knight."

"Musaron," gravely replied the knight, "jest with whatever you will, - but not with holy things."

Musaron made a bow.

"Is my master," he said, "still desirous of learning what may be seen from the summit of that hill?"

"More than ever; go on there."

Musaron made a slight circuit, just enough to keep him out of the reach of his master's lance, then climbing the hill -

"Ah!" he cried, when he had gained the summit, "Ah! Jesus God! what is it I see?" and he made the sign of the cross.

"Well, what do you see?" asked the knight.

"Paradise, or something much resembling it," said Musaron, planged in the most profound admiration.

"Describe me your paradise," replied the knight, who always feared to become the dupe of some jest on his squire's part.

"Ah! sir knight, whatever you can dream of," cried Musaron. "Groves of orange trees, with their golden fruit, a great river with its silver waves, and beyond, the sea shining like a mirror of steel."

"If you see the ocean," said the knight, not hastening to take his part as a spectator of the picture, for fear, lest when arrived at the summit, all this magnificent prospect might have dissolved in vapour, like the mirages of which he had heard the pilgrims of the east speak. "If you see the sea, Musaron, you must certainly be able to see Coimbra much better, as that is between us and the sea; and if you see Coimbra, we are at the end of our journey, since it was at Coimbra that my friend, the Grand Master Frederick, fixed our place of meeting."

"Oh! yes," said Musaron, "I see a large and fine town; I see a lofty church tower."

"'Tis well," said the knight, beginning to believe what his squire told him, and resolving this time to punish very severely this too protracted pleasantry, if pleasantry it were. "Well, it is the town of Coimbra; it is the tower of the cathedral."

"What is it I say? a town! What do I say? a church tower! I see two towns—I see two church towers."

"Two towns! two steeples!" said the knight, arriving in his turn at the brow of the hill; "you

will see that just now we had not enough, and that now we shall have too much."

"Too much, indeed," said Musaron; "do you see, Sir Agénor, one on the right, the other on the left? Do you see the road which on the other side of the lemon grove branches out in two directions? Which of those two towns is Coimbra, and which road must we follow?"

"In fact," murmured the knight, "here is a new perplexity, and one of which I had not hitherto dreamed."

"So much the greater," said Musaron, "that if we are deceived, and that, unfortunately, we take the road of the false Coimbra, we shall be unable to find, at the bottom of our purse, enough to pay for our lodging."

The knight cast around him a second glance, but in the hope this time to perceive some passer-by from whom he might obtain information.

"Accursed country," said he, "or rather accursed desert! for when one says country, one supposes a spot inhabited by some other creatures than lizards and crickets. Oh! where shall we find France," continued the knight, with one of those sighs which sometimes escape from the breast of the least melancholy, when they think of their distant country. France, where one may always find an encouraging voice to point out one's road."

"And a sheep's milk cheese to refresh your throat; see what it is to leave one's country. Ah! Sir Agénor, you have good reason to say, 'France! France!'"

"Hold your tongue, rascal," cried the knight, who was very willing to think himself what Musaron spoke aloud, but unwilling that Musaron should say aloud what he thought in his heart. "Hold your tongue."

Musaron did not think of complying, and the reader must already know the worthy squire intimately enough to know, that on this point, it was not his custom blindly to obey his master. He went on, then, as if only communing with his own thoughts.

"And, besides," said he, "how should we be succoured or saluted? we are alone in this damned Portugal. Oh! the great companies,* that is what is fine, that is what is agreeable, that is what is imposing, and above all, that is what makes it easy to live. Oh! Sir Agénor, why are we not at this moment members of some great company, on horseback on the roads of Languedoc, or of Guienne?"

"You reason like a Jack,† Do you know that, Master Musaron?" said the knight.

"I am so, sir, or at least I was so, before I entered your knightly service."

"Make you a boast of that, fellow?"

"Don't speak ill of them, Sir Agénor; for the Jacks found means to feed while they fought, and in that they had the advantage of us, for we fight not, it is true, but neither do we feed."

* This refers to the predatory associations of armed men, disbanded soldiers, and others, who, during and after the English wars in France, in the fourteenth century, traversed the country raising contributions.—TRANSLATOR.

† "Jacques," in original, "Jacques," or "Jacques Bonhomme," was, during the middle ages, and even up to the present day, a name given to the French peasantry, and it might be doubtful from this circumstance, whether the context does not refer to the "Jacqueries," or insurrections of peasants which occurred consequently on the disorder and devastation accompanying the English invasions. But I know not whether it may be used here as a cant name for the freebooters of the "grandes compagnies." My reason for translating Jacques into Jack, is that Jack in England, as in "Serving Jack," "Jack Knaves," "Jack of all Trades," was used much in the same sense as Jacques in France.—TRANSLATOR.

"All this makes us no wiser, as to which of these towns is Coimbra," grumbled the knight.

"No," said Musaron, "but here are some coming who perhaps will tell us."

And he pointed out to his master a cloud of dust, betokening the approach of a small party of travellers. It came on along the same road they had traversed, at about half a league's distance, and the sun shining upon it, made it at times seem as if spangled with gold.

"Ah!" said the knight, "there is at last what we seek for."

"Yes," said Musaron, "or what ~~is~~ seeking for us."

"Well, just now, did you not ask to meet brigands?"

"But I did not ask for too many," said Musaron. "Truly, fortune is about to overwhelm us with the accomplishment of our wishes; I asked for three or four brigands, and it sends us a troop; we asked for a city, and behold it sends us two. Let us see, sir knight," continued Musaron, drawing nearer to his master, "let us have a consultation, and exchange our opinions; two heads are better than one, you know it. Begin by telling what yours suggest."

"My opinion," replied the knight, "is that we should gain the lemon grove by which the road passes, and which offers us at once, shadow and security; there we will wait, prepared either for attack or defence."

"Oh! most rational opinion," cried the squire, in a tone half of banter, half of conviction, "and which I may embrace without discussion; shade and security, that is all I asked for, this moment. Shade, is half as good as water; security is three parts of courage. Let us gain, then, the lemon wood, and as quickly as we can Sir Agénor."

But the two travellers had forgotten to consider their horses. These poor animals were so fatigued that repeated inflictions of the spur brought them no faster than a walk. Happily this tardiness had no other inconvenience than that of leaving the travellers longer exposed to the sun. The little troop against whom they took these precautions was still too remote to perceive their presence; once arrived at the wood, they made up for time past. Musaron instantly dismounted from his horse, which was so fatigued, that it lay down at the same time as himself; the knight also alighted, flung his bridle into his squire's hand, and sat down at the foot of a palm tree which rose up like the king of that little odorous forest.

Musaron fastened the horse to a tree, and began to hunt for provender in the wood. In a moment's time he returned with a dozen sweet nuts, and two or three lemons, of which he offered the first choice to the knight, who declined with the shake of the head.

"Ah! yes," said Musaron, "I know that it is not very recruiting, for persons who have made four hundred leagues in sixteen days. But what can you do, sir?—we can only take patience. We are going to meet the illustrious Don Frederick, grand master of Saint Jago, brother, or thereabouts of Don Pedro, king of Castile; and if he only keeps to the half of what he promises in his letters, we shall have on our next journey, fresh horses, mules with tinkling bells to attract the passers-by, pages with clothes fitted to strike the eye, and we shall see flashing round us, the girls of the posadas (inns); as also muleteers and beggars; some will offer us wine, others fruits; the least particular will offer us their houses, if only for the honour of lodging us, and then we shall count nothing, precisely be-

cause we shall stand in need of nothing; but till then, we must crack wild nuts, and suck lemons."

"'Tis well, 'tis well, Sir Musaron," said the knight with a smile; "in two days you shall have all you have said, and this meal is your last meagre day."

"May Heaven hear you, sir," said Musaron, raising a look full of doubt, at the same time that he lifted from his head his cap, surmounted by a long eagle's feather of the Pyrenees; I will endeavour to exalt myself in the measure of my fortune, and to do that I need only mount on our past mishaps."

"Bah!" said the knight, "past misfortunes make future happiness."

"Amen," said Musaron.

Without doubt, notwithstanding this religious winding up, Musaron would soon have resumed the conversation on some other ground, when on a sudden, the tinkling of bells, the trot of a dozen horses or mules, and the clattering of iron began to resound some way off.

"Be on the alert!" cried the knight, "here comes the troop in question. The devil! it has made good speed; and it would seem that those who compose it have horses less tired than ours."

Musaron put the remainder of his nuts and his last lemon in a tuft of grass, and ran to the stirrups of his master, who was mounted, and his lance in hand, in an instant.

Then, from among the trees, where they had made their short halt, they could perceive appearing, at the summit of the hill, a troop of travellers mounted on good mules, and richly clad, some in Spanish, some in Moorish habiliments. After the first troop came a man, who appeared the chief, and who, wrapped in a large hooded mantle of fine white wool with its silky fleece outward, only exhibited two sparkling eyes from behind this rampart.

In all, this chief included, there were twelve strong and well armed men, and six led mules, conducted by four valets; these twelve men, as we have already said, took the lead, and after them came the chief; while, after the chief, forming the rear guard, came the six mules, and their four grooms, amongst whom was carried a litter of painted and gilded wood, imperviously closed by silk curtains, and receiving air only through interstices in the ornaments of a carved frieze work going round its top. Two mules, not comprised in the preceding enumeration, drew this litter at a walk.

"Ah! this time," said Musaron, somewhat astonished, "they are indeed true Moors, and I think, sir knight, I have spoken somewhat too soon. See how black they are. Truly! they might be taken for the devil's body guards. And how richly dressed they are, the Unbelievers. Pity, is it not, Sir Agénor, that they should be so many, or that we do not form a larger company? I think it would be doing heaven good service if we could make all that wealth pass into the hands of two such good Christians as ourselves. I say wealth, and that's the right word, for the treasures of that infidel are most certainly in that box of painted and gilded wood which follows him, and which he is at every instant turning round to look at."

"Silence!" said the knight; "don't you see that they are consulting, and that two armed attendants have taken the lead, and that they seem to wish to attack us? Come, come, prepare to lend me a helping hand, if it becomes necessary; and reach me my shield, so that if the opportunity presents

itself, they may learn here what is a knight of France."

"Messire," replied Musaron, who appeared less resolved than his master, on taking a hostile attitude, "I think you deceive yourself, these Moorish lords cannot think of attacking two inoffensive men; see, one of the two attendants has gone to consult his master, and the muffled face has given no order, but has only made a sign to go straight on. Eh? see, sir, there they go, keeping to the road, without preparing their arrows, or bending their crossbows; they only keep their hands on their swords, and they must clearly be friends whom heaven has sent us."

"Friends among the Moors! and what heed do you take to our holy religion, cursed Pagan!"

Musaron felt he had laid himself open to this rebuff, and respectfully bowed his head.

"Pardon, messire," said he; "I was in error when I said friends. A Christian, as I well know, cannot be the friend of a Moor; it is counsellors that I meant to say. It is allowable to receive counsel from all the world, when that counsel is good. I shall go and question these honest gentlemen, and get them to point out our road."

"Well then! be it so; I will have it so," said the knight; "and I will have it so much the more, that they pass in my opinion with too much haughtiness before me, and that I have not perceived their master acknowledge the courteous salute which I made him by lowering the point of my lance. Go then and overtake him, and ask him with civility, on my behalf, which of those two towns is Coimbra. Add that you come on the part of Sir Agénor de Mauléon; and in exchange for my name, ask his own, the name of that Moorish knight.—Depart."

Musaron who wished to present himself before the leader of the troops to the best advantage, strove to raise up his horse; but so long was it since the animal had found shade and grass, and so convenient, and above all, agreeable did it seem to it to graze lying down, that the squire could not bring it to its feet, even for an instant; he therefore made up his mind, and ran on foot after the troops, which having continued to advance during the conference, was fast disappearing in the sinuous slope, under cover of a few olive trees.

While Musaron ran on to deliver his message, Agénor de Mauléon, erect in his saddle, firm in his stirrups, motionless as an equestrian statue, kept his eye fixed on the Moor and his companions; soon he saw the chief horseman stop at the squire's voice, and his escort follow his example; all those who composed it, seemed to live with the life of the chief, as if they had been apprised of his wishes by an interior voice, and had not even need of a sign to make them comply with his will.

The weather was so clear, so profound a silence reigned over that nature slumbering under the glow of the heavens, the breeze from the sea was so gentle, that it brought to the knight's ears the words uttered by Musaron, and Musaron discharged his commission not only as a faithful, but also as a skilful ambassador.

"Hail to your lordship," said he, "in the first place, on behalf of my master, the honourable and valiant Sir Agénor de Mauléon, who waits above on his stirrups, your lordship's reply; hail secondly, on behalf of his unworthy squire, who very sincerely congratulates himself on being permitted to address his speech to you."

The Moor made a grave and measured salute,

with his head only, and waited in silence for the end of the discourse.

"Will your lordship please to point out," continued Musaron, "which of those steeples, which may be seen lower down, is that of Coimbra? Will your lordship also have the goodness to point out, if you know it, which among these fine palaces of the two towns we see, whose terraces command the ocean, is the palace of the illustrious Grand Master of St. Jago, the friend and the impatient host of the valiant knight who has the honour to request from you, through my mouth, this two-fold information."

Musaron, to raise the estimation of himself and his master, had given more emphasis to the words relating to Don Frederick than to the other part of his address. It was a confirmation of his tact that the Moor listened very attentively to the second part of the speech, and on hearing it, his eyes sparkled with that look of intellectual fire peculiar to his nation, and which might seem snatched from the solar beams.

But he gave no more reply to the second, than to the first; and after a moment's reflection, repeating his salute, he uttered to his followers, a single Arabic word, in an imperious and guttural tone of voice; then the advanced guard recommenced its march, the Moorish leader urged on his mule, and the rear-guard, in the midst of which was led the closed litter, followed in its turn.

Musaron remained an instant on the spot, stupefied and humiliated. As to the knight he did not know whether the Arabic word, which he had understood as little as Musaron, had been given in answer to his squire, or addressed by the Moor to his followers.

"Ah!" said he on a sudden, Musaron, who would not admit to himself that he had received such an insult, "he does not understand French, that is the cause of his silence. I should have addressed him in Castilian." But, as the Moor was already too far for Musaron to run after him on foot, and as, besides, the prudent squire no doubt preferred a consolatory doubt, to a mortifying certainty, he returned to his master.

CHAPTER III.

HOW, WITHOUT THE MOOR'S AID, THE KNIGHT, AGÉNOR DE MAULEON, FOUND COIMBRA AND THE PALACE OF DON FREDERICK, GRAND MASTER OF ST. JAGO.

AGÉNOR, furious at what he had heard, and his squire repeated to him, had, for an instant, the idea of obtaining by force, what the Moor had refused to courtesy. But when he gave his horse the spur to chase the impertinent Saracen, the poor animal showed so little inclination to second the designs of its master, that the knight was obliged to stop on the slope strewn with pebbles, which formed the only road. The rear-guard of the Moor's escort observed the proceedings of the two Franks, and turned round, from time to time, to avoid a surprise.

"Messire Agénor," cried Musaron, alarmed at this demonstration, from which, however, the weariness of the horse took away every chance of danger, "Messire Agénor, have I not already told you that the Moor did not understand French; and did I not say, that astonished like yourself at his silence, the idea of addressing him in Spanish occurred to me, but when he was already too far to allow me to put the idea into execution? It is not with him that you ought to be offended, but

with me, to whom this unfortunate idea did not sooner occur. Besides," added he, seeing that the knight had been obliged to come to a halt, "besides, we are alone, and you see that your horse is worn out."

Mauléon shook his head.

"All that is very well said," he replied, "but that Moor did not act naturally; one may be unable to understand French, but in all countries one understands the universal language of gesture. Now in pronouncing the word Coimbra, you pointed out to him alternately the two towns, he must therefore necessarily have guessed that you were asking your road. I cannot at this moment overtake this insolent Moor. But by our Redeemer's blood, which cries vengeance against the Infidel, let him never again find himself on my path."

"On the contrary, sir," said Musaron, in whom prudence never excluded either courage or resentment; "on the contrary, meet him again, but under other circumstances. Meet him face to face, with only the lacqueys who guard his litter. For example, you will take charge of the master, I of the servants; and then we will see what he keeps in that box of painted wood."

"Some idol, no doubt," replied the knight.

"Or else his treasure," said Musaron; "a great coffer with diamonds, pearls, rubies, enough to need both one's hands to lift them. For these cursed Infidels know all the magic arts by which hidden treasures are discovered. Oh! had we been only, sir—nay, only four, we should have shown you what was what, Master Moor. Oh! France! France!" continued Musaron, "where are you? Valiant men-at-arms, where are you? Respectable adventurers, my companions, why are you not here?"

"Ah! but," said on a sudden the knight, who, during this sally of his squire, had remained in reflection, "I now think——"

"Of what?" said Musaron.

"Of Don Frederick's letter."

"Well then?"

"Well, in this letter, perhaps, we may find, regarding the road to Coimbra, some information which I may have forgotten."

"Ah! 'fore God, that is thinking soundly and speaking to the purpose. The letter, Sir Agénor, produce the letter, if only to comfort us by the fine promises which it makes you."

The knight unfastened from his holster a small roll of perfumed leather, and from this roll drew out a parchment. It was the letter of Don Frederick, which he kept at once as a passport and a talisman. These were its contents:—

"Noble and generous knight, Don Agénor de Mauléon, do you remember the stout stroke of lance which you exchanged at Narbonne, with Don Frederick, grand master of St. Jago, when the Castilians came to France to escort to their country, Donna Bianca de Bourbon?"

"He means Madame Blanche de Bourbon," interrupted the squire, nodding his head with the air of a man pretending to understand Spanish, and not wishing to let slip an occasion for displaying his knowledge.

The knight looked aslant at Musaron, with that expression with which he was accustomed to meet the various modes of braggadocio, in which his squire indulged. Then reverting his eyes to the parchment, he continued:—

"I have promised to preserve you in my memory, for you behaved to me with nobleness and courtesy."

"The fact is," again interrupted Musaron, "that

you might, sir knight, have easily stuck your poniard into his throat, as you did so neatly to the Mongat of Lourdes in the combat of the Pas de Larre, where you made your first beginning. For in that famous tourney in which you unhorsed him, and in which, furious at being unhorsed, he asked to continue the combat with sharpened weapons, instead of the arms of courtesy, with which you had hitherto fought, you held him completely under your knee. And instead of abusing your victory, you generously said to him, I still hear the noble words—"Arise, Grand Master of St. Jago, to remain the honour of Castilian chivalry."

And Musaron accompanied these last words with a gesture full of dignity, by which he, no doubt, parodied without meaning it, the gesture which his master made on that glorious occasion.

"If he was unhorsed," said Mauléon, "'twas the fault of his charger, which could not stand the shock. Those steeds of mixed Arabian and Castilian breed, better than ours in chase, are of less value in conflict. And if he fell under me 'twas the fault of his spur which caught by the root of a tree, at the moment that I dealt an axe's blow on his head; for he is an intrepid and skilful knight. Notwithstanding," continued Agénor with a feeling of pride, which all the modesty of which he had given proof did not permit him to repress, "the day on which occurred that memorable passage of arms near Narbonne, was a fine day for me."

"Without reckoning that you received the prize from my lady Blanche de Bourbon, who herself had become quite pale and trembling, the sweet princess, when she saw that the tourney of which she came as a spectator had changed into a downright battle. Yes, sir," replied Musaron, quite palpitating at the idea of the greatness awaiting his master and himself at Coimbra, "you have reason to say that it was a fine day, for it gave birth to your fortune."

"I hope so," modestly answered Agénor, "but let us continue." And he resumed his perusal.

"I recall to you this day the promise which you made to grant to no one but myself, the brotherhood of arms. We are both Christians, come to me at Coimbra in Portugal, which I have just won from the Infidel. I will procure you an opportunity for performing bright deeds of arms against the enemies of our holy faith. You shall live in my palace, like myself, and at my court as my brother. Come, then, my brother, for I have great need of a man who loves me, living, as I do, in the midst of adroit and dangerous enemies."

"Coimbra is a town which you must know by name, situated, as I have already said, in Portugal, two leagues from the sea, on the river Mondégo. You will only have to traverse friendly states: first, Arragon, which is the primitive domain left by Don Sancho the Great to Ramiro, who was a natural son, like yourself, and who was as great a king as you are a valiant knight; then New Castile, of which Alphonso VI. commenced the conquest from the Moors, and which has been completely conquered by his successors; then, Léon, theatre of the great deeds of the illustrious Pelagius, that worthy knight whose history I related to you; then you will cross the Agueda, and you find yourself in Portugal, where I await you. Do not approach too near to the mountains which lie on your left, unless you have a considerable suite, and put no trust in the Jews or Moors whom you meet with on your road."

"Adieu! remember that I called myself during

one whole day, Agénor in your honour, as you called yourself, one day, Federigo in mine.

"I marched also under your colours that whole day, as you marched under mine. It was thus that we went, you bearing my scarf, I bearing yours, side by side, as far as Urgel, escorting our well-beloved queen, Donna Bianca de Bourbon. Come, Don Agénor, I stand in want of a brother and a friend—come."

"Nothing in that letter," said Musaron, "nothing that can guide us."

"On the contrary, everything," said Agénor; "did you not remark, and it is true, that during one whole day I wore his scarf?"

"Well, then?"

"Well! those colours were red and yellow. Look, then, Musaron, you, whose eyesight is so piercing, and seek if you can discern in either of those towns, an edifice on which floats a banner yellow as gold, and red as blood; that edifice must be the palace of my friend, Don Frederick, and the buildings surrounding it the town of Coimbra."

Musaron raised his hand over his eyes to intercept the rays of the sun, which confounded every object under floods of light, forming a sea of fire; and having allowed his look to wander from right to left, and left to right, fixed them at last on a town situated on the right of the river, in one of the windings marked out by its course.

"Sir Agénor," said Musaron, "in that case, there is Coimbra on the right, at the foot of the hill, and behind that rampart of plantains and aloes; for on the principal building floats the banner you have described, only it is surmounted by a red cross."

"The cross of Saint James!" cried the knight; "that is it." But are you not under some mistake, Musaron?"

"Will you look yourself, sir knight?"

"The sun is so fierce, that I scarcely distinguish anything."

"Down there, messire, down there. Follow the road—there, between the two branches of the river. It forms two branches, does it not?"

"Yes."

"Follow the right branch which skirts the river. See you the troops of the Moor entering by one of the gates? Look, look."

Just at that moment the sun, which till then had been an obstacle to the travellers, came to Musaron's assistance, by causing a reflection of light from the Moorish armour inlaid with gold.

"Well, well, I see," he said.

Then after a moment's reflection: "Ah! the Moor was going to Coimbra, and yet could not understand the word Coimbra; very probable. The first courtesy which I must seek from Don Frederick, is punishment for his insolence. But how is it," continued the knight, always speaking to himself, "that Don Frederick, so pious a prince, placed by his title in the first rank of the defenders of our faith, suffers Moors in a town newly conquered, and from which he has but just expelled them?"

"What can you expect, messire?" replied Musaron, without having been questioned. Is not Don Frederick the natural brother of the Lord Don Pedro, King of Castile?"

"Well, then?" asked Agénor,

"Well, sir, are you not aware, and if not, it is surprising, for the rumour came to France, that love for the Moors is innate in that family. The king, it is said, cannot dispense with them. He has Moors for counsellors, Moors for doctors,

Moors for body guards; finally, he has Moorish women for his mistresses."

"Silence, Master Musaron," said the knight; "and trouble yourself with the affairs of the king. Don Pedro, a very great prince, and the brother of my illustrious friend."

"Brother, brother," murmured Musaron; "I have also heard say that that was one of your Moorish fraternities, which some day end by the bowstring or the sabre's edge. I should prefer having for a brother Guillonnet, who tends goats in the valley of Andoru, while he sings:

'On the mountains high summit
A shepherd complains;'

than having for such, the King Don Pedro of Castile. Such is my private opinion."

"It is possible that such may be your opinion," said the knight; "but mine is, that you don't say another word on the subject. When one comes to ask people's hospitality, the least one can do, is not to speak ill of them."

"We are not visiting Don Pedro of Castile," replied the intractable Musaron, "we are visiting Don Frederick, Lord of Coimbra, in Portugal."

"Be it one or the other, hold your peace; for I insist on it."

Musaron raised his cap, and bowed, with a sarcastic laugh, which his long hair, black as ebony, falling over meagre and sun-burnt cheeks, concealed from his master.

"When your lordship is desirous of leaving," he said, after a moment's silence, "his very humble servant is at his orders."

"You must first ask that of your horse," said Mauléon. "But in any case, if he will not rise, we must leave him where he is; and when the evening comes, and when he hears the wolves howl, he will regain the town by himself."

And, in fact, as if the animal which owed the name given him by the squire to the valley in which he had first drawn breath, had heard the threat regarding him, he rose up with more alacrity than might have been anticipated, and came to present to his master a flank still streaming with sweat.

"Let us leave, then," said Agénor.

And he rode on, raising for the second time the vizor of his helmet, which he had lowered on the passage of the Moor.

Had the Arabian chief been there, his piercing glance might have seen through the opening of the helmet a handsome and noble countenance, soiled by dust and heat, but full of character; a determined look, thin cutlips, expressive of address, teeth white as ivory, a chin still devoid of beard, but brought out with that boldness, which announces a most obstinate will.

In fine, a young and handsome knight was Sir Agénor de Mauléon, and such he might think himself as he glanced into the polished surface of his shield, which he had taken from Musaron's hands.

This instant's delay had restored some vigour to the two horses. The rest of the road was therefore gone through at a somewhat rapid step, certainty of direction being insured by the colours of the Grand Master of Saint Jago floating on the palace. In proportion as they advanced, the inhabitants, in spite of the heat of the day, were seen to sally out from their gates. The trumpets were heard to resound, and the belfry chimes filled the air with the joyous and vibrating clusters of their notes.

"If I had sent Musaron forward," said Agénor, to himself, "I might really have supposed that all this rumour and ceremony were got up in my

honour. But though such a reception might be very flattering to my self-love, I must necessarily attribute all this noise to some other cause."

As to Musaron, who saw in all this agitation only the overt signs of rejoicing, he gaily raised his head, preferring in any case to be received by people in a merry mood, rather than by those in a mood of sadness.

The travellers had not been mistaken. A great agitation pervaded the town, and, if the faces of the inhabitants did not exactly wear that smiling mask of joy which the ringing of bells, and the flourishes of trumpets seemed to enjoin, their physiognomies at least wore the expression of people just informed of important and unexpected news.

As to inquiring their way, Agénor and his squire found it quite superfluous, as they had only need to follow the crowd, thronging towards the chief place of the town.

At the moment that they were pushing through the crowd to arrive at this place, and while Musaron was dealing blows left and right, with the handle of his whip, to open a road for the noble knight who followed him, they suddenly saw arise before their eyes, shaded by lofty palm trees, and by sycomores bent in the direction which, in tempestuous weather, the sea wind gave them, the magnificent Moorish Alcazar, built by King Muhammad, and serving as a residence to the young conqueror, Don Frederick.

However hasty they were to arrive, Agénor and his squire could not forbear remaining an instant in admiration before that vast and magnificent structure, everywhere embroidered with the finest fret-work of stone, and incrustated with marble mosaic work which seemed like plates of topaz, sapphire and lapis lazuli, mounted by some architect of Bagdad, for a palace of fairies or houries. The west, and even that part of the west called the South of France, knew only its Romane* cathedrals of Saint Trophima, or its antique bridges and arches, but had not then an idea of those ogives and trefoils of granite, which the east was to design a hundred years later on the front of cathedrals, and the summit of towers. It was, therefore, a magnificent sight, that Alcazar of Coimbra, even for our ignorant and barbarous ancestors, who despised, at that period, the Arabic and Italian civilization, which was later to enrich them. While the travellers thus remained immovable and contemplative, they saw coming out from each of the two lateral gates of the palace, a troop of guards and pages leading, by hand, horses and mules. These two troops, each describing a quarter of a circle, returned to effect a junction, driving the people before them, and so marking out in front of the centre gate, to which one mounted by ten flights of stairs, a large empty space in the form of an arch, to which the façade of the palace served as a chord. The mixture of the dazzling splendour of African with the more severe elegance of western costume, gave an irresistible attraction to this spectacle, and one of which Agénor and his

squire experienced the influence, while they saw on one side, streams of gold and purple on the housings of the Arab horses, and the dresses of their Moorish riders; and on the other, silk and engraved armours; and above all that Frankish pride which seemed as it were engrained, even in the bearing of the beasts of burthen.

As to the people, on seeing all this show displayed, it cried "*Viva!*" as it does at the sight of all shows.

Suddenly, the banner of the Grand Master of St. Jago appeared under the high vault, carved in trefoil, which formed the middle gate of the Alcazar; this banner, escorted by six guardsmen and carried by a powerful man-at-arms, was borne to the centre of the empty space."

Agénor understood that Don Frederick was about to make some processions through the streets, or some journey from one town to another, and felt inclined, notwithstanding the exhaustion of his purse, to seek some hostelry where he might await his return; for he did not wish to disturb the arrangements of this departure by an inopportune appearance.

But that very instant, he saw sallying forth through one of the lateral gates, the advanced guard of the Moorish chief, followed by that famous litter of gilt wood, so well shut in and balanced on the backs of four white mules, which had given such strong and such pious temptations to Musaron.

Lastly, a louder flourish of trumpets and horns announced that the grand master was about to appear, and twenty-four musicians, presenting eight in front, advanced from the archway to the steps, which they descended, sounding their instruments.

Behind them bounded forward a dog, one of the vigorous yet slender race of the Sierra, with a head as pointed as a bear's, an eye sparkling like that of a lynx, limbs sinewy as those of a deer. All his body was covered with long and silky hair, the gloss of which shone in the sun, like a reflection of silver; on his throat he wore a large collar of gold set with rubies, with a golden bell; his joy was visible in his bounds, and these bounds referred to a visible and also an unseen object. The visible object was a horse white as snow, covered by a great housing of purple and brocade, which returned the dog's caresses by a responding neigh. The hidden object was, no doubt, some noble lord detained under the archway, to which the dog impatiently returned to re-appear joyous, and bounding the instant afterwards.

Lastly, the object of the horse's neighings, the dog's boundings, and the *vivas* shouted by the people, appeared in his turn, and one only cry resounded, repeated by a thousand voices—"Long live Don Frederick!" In fact Don Frederick was approaching, conversing with the Arab chief who walked on his right side, while a young page of attractive physiognomy, although his black eyebrows, and the slight contraction of his vermilion lips, gave him an appearance of firmness, walked on his left, holding open a purse full of pieces of gold, which Don Frederick, on arriving at the first stair, took out by handfuls, and, with a hand white and delicate as a woman's, sent in a dazzling shower over the heads of the multitude, who redoubled its acclamation at this bounty, to which they had not been accustomed under the predecessors of their new master.

This new master was of a stature which seemed majestic even on horseback. The mixture of the blood of Gaul with that of Spain had given

* This is not to be confounded with *Roman*. The people and language to whom this term refers, were those of Provence and Languedoc, though of course it is derived from the word Roman, and originally meant the same thing. The 'Romane' language was the corrupt mixture of the Latin language, with Gallic or Frankish idioms, which formed the dialect of Provence, &c. It was also termed the *Langue d'Oc*, whence the name of that French province. The distinction adverted to in the text, is between the round arched style and the pointed, in what is termed "gothic" architecture. Though it is a subject of controversy how far the pointed arch was introduced from the Mahomedan territories, it appears certain that much of the ornate decoration of that style has such an origin.—TRANSLATOR.

him long black hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion; and his blue eyes cast looks of so much mildness and benevolence, that many, not to lose sight of him for an instant, omitted even to pick up the sequins, and that the air round the palace everywhere resounded with benedictions.

Suddenly, in the midst of this expansive rejoicing, whether it were chance, or the influence of momentary separation from so good a master, the trumpets and clarions, which had interrupted their clangour for an instant, resumed their notes, but instead of the gay and joyful flourish which they had just uttered, they now gave forth to the people a sad and mournful sound, while the bells, those new inventions to interpret between man and God, instead of their swift and brilliant chimes, gave forth a dull, lugubrious, and prolonged toll, which resembled the tocsin.

At the same time, the dog standing on its hind legs before his master, placed his two paws on his breast, and howled in so long, gloomy, and lamentable a manner, as to make the bravest shudder. The crowd became silent; and, from the midst of this silence, a voice went forth, —

“Go not hence, grand master, remain with us, Don Frederick.”

But no one could discover who had uttered this advice. At this cry, Agénor saw the Moor tremble and his face take an earthy colour, which is the paleness of those children of the sun, while his anxious glance sought to read in the very heart of Don Frederick, the reply which he would make to that general stupor and that isolated cry. But Don Frederick, caressing with one hand his howling dog, making a gracious sign to his page, and greeting the multitude who looked on him with supplicating eyes and joined hands, with a melancholy smile, said:—

“My good friends, the king my brother has demanded my presence at Seville, where feats and tourneys await me, as rejoicings over our reconciliation. Instead of wishing to prevent me from rejoining my brother and my king, rather bless the agreement between two brothers who love each other.”

But instead of receiving these words with joy, the people listened to them with gloomy silence. The page slid in some words to his master, and the dog continued his howlings. During this time, the Moor never lost sight either of the people, the page, the dog, or Don Frederick himself. But the forehead of the grand master became for an instant overclouded. The Moor thought that he hesitated.

“My lord,” said he, “you know that all men have their destiny inscribed before them, some in a book of gold, others in one of brass. Yours is written in the book of gold, fulfil, then, boldly your destiny.”

Don Frederick raised his eyes, which for an instant he had held lowered as if to seek in the multitude a friendly face and a voice of encouragement. Just at that moment Agénor was rising in his stirrups so as not to lose the least detail of the scene going on before him. As if he had guessed what the grand master was looking for, he raised with one hand, the vizor of his helmet, with the other he brandished his lance. The grand master uttered a cry of joy, his eyes sparkled, and a smile of delight, undulating over his lips as rosy as those of a young girl, spread over his whole countenance.

“Don Agénor!” he cried, extending his hand to the knight. As if the page had the privilege to read in his heart, he had no need to hear more,

and, springing from the side of Don Frederick, he ran to the knight, calling out,

“Come, Don Agénor, come.”

The crowd made room, for it loved all that was loved by Don Frederick, and at the same instant all eyes became fixed on the knight, whom the grand master received with the utmost joy, as Tobias did the divine companion sent him by heaven.

Agénor dismounted, flung the bridle of his steed into the hands of Musaron, gave him his lance, fastened his shield to the bow of his saddle, and traversed the crowd, conducted by the page.

The Moor again took his departure. He had just recognised the young Frankish knight whom he had met on the road to Coimbra, and whose squire he had left unanswered.

In the meantime, Frederick extended his arms to Agénor, and this last flung himself into them with all the warmth of a heart of twenty years.

It was well worth while to see these two handsome young men, whose faces breathed all those noble sentiments, which so rarely complete the image of beauty on the earth.

“Do you follow me?” asked Don Frederick of Agénor.

“Anywhere,” replied the knight.

“My friends,” resumed the grand master, with that well-toned voice which was the delight of the multitude, I can now take my leave without your having anything to fear on my account; Don Agénor de Mauléon, my brother, my friend, the flower of French chivalry, accompanies me.”

And, on a sign from the grand master, the drums struck up a quick march, the trumpets sounded a joyful flourish, the squire brought Don Frederick his handsome horse, white as snow, and all the people cried with a single voice, “Long live Don Frederick, Grand Master of St. Jago; long live Don Agénor, the French knight!”

At that moment Don Frederick’s dog went to look in the faces of the knight and the Moor. To the Moor he showed his teeth, with a surly and threatening growl; to the knight he offered a thousand caresses.

The page passed his hand, with a sad smile, along the neck of the dog.

“My lord,” said Agénor to the young prince, “when you begged me to follow you, and I replied that I would follow, I only consulted my zeal, as I did in coming from Tarbes here. I made the journey from Tarbes in sixteen days, that is hard marching; my horses, therefore, are nearly dead beat, and I cannot accompany your lordship much further.”

“Nay,” said Don Frederick, “did I not say that my palace was yours? My arms and horses are at your disposal, as is all that I have at Coimbra. Go and seek in my stables horses for yourself, mules for your squire—or rather, no, no, do not quit me for an instant. Fernando will take charge of all that. Go and saddle Antrim, my battle horse, and ask, as you go by the squire of Don Agénor, which he prefers, a horse or a mule. As to your tired beasts, you care for them, and every good knight cares for his own; they shall follow in the rear-guard and be well attended to.”

The page made but one leap and disappeared.

During this time, the Moor, who believed that the departure was about to take place, had alighted, to go round his litter and give some orders to those who guarded it. But seeing that the departure was delayed, and that the two friends being left together were about to exchange some confidential words, he quickly returned to



where they stood, and took his station by the side of the grand master.

"Lord Mothril," said this last, "the knight whom you see here, is one of my friends. He is more than my friend, he is my brother in arms; I bring him with me to Seville, for I wish to offer him to my lord, the King of Castile, as a captain; and if, after I have made the offer, the king consents that he shall remain with me, I shall bless him for doing so. For his sword is of the keenest, and his heart even more valiant than his sword."

The Moor replied in excellent Spanish, although with that guttural accent which Agénor had already remarked when on the road to Coimbra, he had pronounced that single Arab word, after which he resumed his march.

"I thank your lordship for having told me the name and quality of the worthy knight, but chance had already made me meet the noble Frenchman. Unfortunately a stranger, a traveller, when, like

myself, he is of a race which is the object of hostility, must often be on his guard against chance meetings. I did not therefore greet the Lord Agénor with the courtesy which I should have shown when I met him just now in the mountains."

"Ah! ah!" said Don Frederick, with curiosity, "your lordships have then already met."

"Yes, my lord," replied Agénor, in French, "and I must confess that the neglect of the Moorish noble to reply to the simple question which I addressed him through my squire has given me some offence. We are more civil on the other side of the Pyrenees to our stranger guests."

"Messire," replied Mothril, in Spanish, "you are in error on that point. The Moors are still in Spain, it is true, but they are no longer in their own country; and at this side of the Pyrenees, except at Granada, the Moors are no longer anything more than the guests of the Spaniards."

"See, now," said Musaron, who had gradually drawn near to the steps, to himself; "he now seems to understand French."

"Let this cloud between you disperse; the Lord Mothril, friend and minister of my Lord the King of Castile, will show some favour, no doubt, to the Chevalier de Mauléon, the friend and brother of his brother."

The Moor bowed without replying, and as Musaron, always anxious to learn what was held by the litter, was drawing nearer than Mothril no doubt thought fit, he descended the steps, and under pretence of giving some forgotten directions to his servants, he went and placed himself between the squire and the litter.

Frederick turned this moment to account by leaning towards Agénor's ear.

"You see," said he, "in that Moor the man who governs my brother, and, consequently, the man who governs me."

"Ah!" said Agénor; "why those bitter words? A prince of your race—a knight of your valour—remember always, Don Frederick, should never be governed but by God."

"And yet I am going to Seville," replied the grand master, with a sigh.

"And why do you go there?"

"The king, Don Pedro, has prayed me to do so, and the prayers of Don Pedro are commands."

The Moor seemed divided between the fear of leaving his litter, and that of letting Don Frederick say too much to the French knight. The last prevailed; and he returned to where the two friends stood.

"My lord," said he to Don Frederick, "I come to announce a piece of intelligence to your lordships, which will clash with your project. I have been assuring myself on the subject with my secretary, although previously nearly certain of it. The king, Don Pedro, has, as the commander of his guards, a captain of Tarifa, a valiant officer, in whom he places all his confidence; although he, or rather his ancestors, were born on the other side of the straits. I fear, therefore, lest the French knight should take useless trouble by seeking the court of the king, Don Pedro. Wherefore, I should advise him to remain at Coimbra, the more so as Donna Padilla does not love the French; that is well known."

"Truly," said Frederick; "is it so, Lord Mothril? In that case, so much the better; I shall keep my friend by myself."

"I did not come to seek Spain, but Portugal. I did not come to serve the king, Don Pedro, but the grand master, Don Frederick," said Agénor, proudly. "The service that I have sought, is the only one I wish for, and I hold it. There is my master:" and he courteously saluted his friend.

The Moor smiled. His white teeth shone under his black beard.

"Oh! what fine teeth!" said Musaron. "How well he must be able to bite."

At that moment the page brought forward Antrim, the grand master's war charger, and the Coronella, Musaron's mule. An exchange was instantly effected: Agénor de Mauléon mounted the fresh horse, Musaron the mule; the tired beasts were placed in the hands of the grooms of the suite, and on the invitation of the Moor, Don Frederick descended the steps, and wished to mount in his turn.

But a second time, the beautiful dog with the long white silky hair opposed himself to this design. He placed himself between his master and the horse, pushing back his master and howling.

But Don Frederick thrust him aside with his foot, and, notwithstanding all the warnings of the faithful animal, vaulted into the saddle, and gave the order for departure. Then, as if he had understood that order, and it had made him desperate, the dog sprung at the charger's throat, and cruelly bit him.

The horse reared, neighing with pain, and made a side bound which would have unseated any less skilful cavalier than Don Frederick.

"Well, now! Alan," said he, giving to his dog the name of the race to which the animal belonged. "Wicked beast, are you going mad?" And he gave it so violent a blow with the thong of the whip which he held, that the animal rolled over to ten paces distance.

"That dog should be killed," said Mothril.

Fernando looked askant at the Moor.

Alan went to sit down on the steps of the Alcázar, raised his head, opened his jaws, and howled lamentably once more.

Then all the people who had silently looked on at the passing scene, raised their voices, and the cry which had previously been uttered by one voice, became a general exclamation.

"Do not leave us, grand master, Don Frederick! remain with us, grand master! what need have you of a brother, when you have a people? What does Seville promise which Coimbra does not offer?"

"My lord!" said Mothril, "must I return to the king, my master, and say that your dog, your page, and your people will not permit you to come?"

"No, Lord Mothril" said Don Frederick, "we depart—move on, my friends."

And saluting the people with his hand, he placed himself at the head of the cavalcade, making his way through the multitude, which silently opened at his approach.

They shut the gilded gratings of the Alcázar, which as they shut creaked like the rusty gates of an empty sepulchre.

The dog remained on the steps as long as he could see his master, and might hope that he would change his resolution and return, but when he had lost that hope, when Don Frederick had disappeared at the turning of the street leading to the gate of Seville, he sprung forward in pursuit, and, in a few bounds, was by his side, as if not having been able to prevent his placing himself in danger, he at least wished to share it with him.

Ten minutes afterwards all had left Coimbra, and taken the road whence had come in the morning, the Moor, Mothril, and Agénor Mauléon.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW MUSARON PERCEIVED THAT THE MOOR SPOKE TO HIS LITTER, AND THAT THE LITTER REPLIED.

THE grand master's escort comprised in all thirty-eight men, including the French knight and his squire, but without counting the Moor and his twelve guards, pages, or lackeys; sumpter mules carried the costly and cumbrous baggage; for Frederick had already been apprised a week that his brother awaited him at Seville when Mothril arrived. When that took place, he gave orders to depart on the instant, hoping that the Moor would be too fatigued to follow, and would lag in the rear. But fatigue seemed unknown to those children of the desert, and to their horses, which appeared to

descend from those steeds sung by Virgil, whom the wind rendered fruitful.

Ten leagues were performed that very day, then at nightfall, the tents were pitched on the decline of the mountains, at the extremity of which rises the town of Pombul.

During this first day's journey, the Moor had kept most assiduous watch over the two friends. Under the pretext at first of making apology to the French knight, and afterwards of atoning for past rudeness by present courtesy, he had only quitted Agénor during the time necessary to interchange a few words with the keepers of the litter. But however short were those intervals of absence to which he appeared driven by some feeling more strong than any other, they gave Agénor time to say to the grand master:

"My Lord Don Frederick, have the condescension, I beg, to inform me, whence comes this officiousness on the part of the Lord Mothril, in following us and mixing in our conversation? He must, my lord, be very much attached to you; for on my part, I do not believe that I received his somewhat tardy attentions, in such a manner as to inspire him with a very ardent affection for me."

"I know not whether Mothril loves me much," said Don Frederick, "but I know he thoroughly hates Donna Padilla, the king's mistress."

Agénor looked at the grand master with the air of a man who has heard, but has not understood. But the prying Moor came up on the instant, and Don Frederick had only time to say to the knight:

"Let us speak on some other subject."

Agénor hastened to obey, and as the thought naturally occurred to his mind:

"By-the-bye, noble Don Frederick," he said, "be so good as to inform me, how our honoured Lady Blanche of Bourbon, Queen of Castile, has accustomed herself to her residence in Spain. There is much anxiety afloat in France respecting that good princess, whom so many good wishes accompanied on her departure from Narbonne, where you came to rule her on the part of the king, her husband."

Agénor had not finished, when he felt his left knee briskly rubbed against by the right knee of the page, who, as if carried away by his horse, passed through, between Don Frederick and his friend, and while he made excuses to the knight for himself and his horse, cast at him at the same time a look fit to make the most indiscreet person keep his words between his teeth.

However, Don Frederick understood that it was necessary to answer, as in his situation, silence might bear a still worse interpretation than words.

"But," interrupted Mothril, who seemed to have as much interest in maintaining the conversation as Frederick in letting it drop, "has the Lord Agénor heard no news of Donna Biancas since she has been in Spain?"

"Noble Moor," replied the knight, quite surprised, "for the last two or three years, I have been campaigning with the great companies against the English, the enemies of my master, King John, who is a prisoner in London, and of our regent, Prince Charles, who will one day be called Charles the Wise, so precocious is the prudence, so lofty the virtue he evinces."

"Wherever you might have been," replied Mothril, "I should have thought that the affair of Toledo made a noise which must have reached you."

Don Frederick grew a little pale, and the page put his finger to his lips, as a sign to Agénor that he ought to be silent.

Agénor understood perfectly, and was contented to mutter inwardly, "Spain! Spain! land of mysteries!"

But that would not serve Mothril's turn. "Since you are no better informed than that, Sir Knight, on the subject of your regent's sister-in-law, it is I who must tell you what has become of her."

"To what purpose, noble Mothril?" said Don Frederick; "the question asked by my friend Don Agénor is one of those common-place inquiries which are best answered by a yes or no, and not by one of those long stories which can possess no interest for any listener who is a stranger to Spain."

"But," said Mothril, "if the noble Agénor is a stranger to Spain, at least he is not a stranger in France, and the Lady Bianca is a French woman. Besides, the recital will not be long, and it is necessary that the noble Agénor, as he is going to the King of Castile's court, should know what is said, and what should not be spoken there."

Don Frederick heaved a sigh and drew his large white mantle over his eyes, as if to avoid the last rays of the setting sun.

"You accompanied Donna Bianca, from Narbonne as far as Urgel," resumed Mothril; "is this the truth, or am I in error, noble Agénor?"

"It is the truth," answered the knight, who, though the warning of the page, and the clouded countenance of Don Frederick had rendered him cautious, was incapable of dissembling the truth.

"Well, then! she pursued her journey towards Madrid, traversing Arragon and a part of New Castile, under the care of the noble Don Frederick, who conducted her to Alcala, where the royal marriage was solemnised with a magnificence worthy of the illustrious rank of the parties espoused; but on the ensuing morning, the motive has remained a mystery," continued Mothril casting on Don Frederick one of those piercing and brilliant glances which were habitual to him; "on the ensuing morning, the king returned to Madrid, leaving his young wife, rather a prisoner than a queen in the Castle of Alcala."

Mothril paused a moment as if to see whether either of the two friends would say anything in favour of Donna Bianca; but both were silent. The Moor then went on.

"From that moment, a complete separation took place between husband and wife. Nay, more, a council of bishops pronounced a sentence of divorce; there must have been, you will allow, Sir Knight, very grave motives of complaint against the foreign woman," continued the Moor, with his ironical laugh, "for so holy and venerable a body as a council, to break the bonds which policy and religion had formed."

"Or else," replied Frederick, incapable of longer concealing his secret sentiments, "that the council was entirely devoted to the will of the king, Don Pedro."

"Oh," said Mothril, with that apparent simplicity which renders a jest sharper and more bitter, "how is it to be supposed that forty-two holy personages, whose vocation it is to direct the consciences of others, should thus have slighted their own? It is impossible, or else what are we to think of a religion represented by such ministers?"

The two friends remained silent.

"About this time, the king fell ill, and it was believed that he was about to die. Then every hidden ambition began to reveal itself openly, and the Lord Don Henry of Transtamara——"

"Noble Mothril," said Frederick, availing him-

self of this opportunity to reply to the Moor, "forget not that Don Henry of Transtamara is my twin brother, and that I will no more permit him to be spoken of ill in my presence, than I will my brother Don Pedro, King of Castile."

"'Tis just," replied Mothril, "excuse me, illustrious grand master. In seeing him so rebellious, and you so affectionately attached to the king, Don Pedro, I had forgotten your brotherhood. I will therefore speak only of the Lady Blanche."

"Cursed Moor!" muttered Don Frederick.

Agénor cast a look at the grand master, which seemed to ask, "Do you wish to be rid of this man, my lord? The business would soon be done."

Mothril appeared as if he had neither heard the words nor seen the look.

"I said, then, that ambition was aroused, while loyalty grew slack, and that at the moment Don Pedro was on the brink of eternity, the gates of Alcala, were opened, and on a certain night Donna Bianca left it, escorted by an unknown knight, who led her as far as Toledo, where she remained hidden. But Providence so willed it that our well-beloved king, Don Pedro, protected by the prayers of his subjects, and probably of his family, regained his health and strength. It was then that he learnt the flight of Donna Bianca, the assistance of the unknown knight, and the spot whither the fugitive had withdrawn. He ordered her immediate arrest. Some say that it was to re-conduct her to France, and that is the opinion which I hold; others say that it was to shut her up in a closer prison than the first. But in any case, whatever were the intentions of the king her husband, Donna Bianca, warned in time of the orders which had been given, took refuge in the cathedral of Toledo one Sunday, during the performance of divine service, and there declared to the inhabitants that she claimed the right of sanctuary, and that she placed herself under the safeguard of the God of Christians. It seems that Donna Bianca is beautiful," continued the Moor, casting his eyes in succession on the knight and the grand master, as if to question them, "too beautiful even. For my part, I have never seen her. Her beauty, the mystery attached to her misfortunes, then, perhaps influences set to work long before hand, raised the feelings of all in her favour. The bishop, who was one of those who had declared the marriage annulled, was driven out of his church, which was converted into a fortress, and preparations were made to defend Donna Bianca against the guards of the king, who were marching thither."

"What," cried Agénor, "the king's guards were to snatch Donna Bianca from a church! Christians consented to violate the right of sanctuary."

"Why, yes, certainly!" replied Mothril. "The king, Don Pedro, had first applied to his Moorish archers, but these humbly submitted to him that the sacrilege would be still greater if infidels were employed in such a profanation, and Don Pedro understood their scruples. He therefore applied to Christians, who consented. What can you expect, sir knight! all religions are full of such inconsistencies, and those are the best which contain the fewest."

"Do you mean to say, infidel that you are," said the grand master, "that the religion of your Prophet is better than the religion of Christ?"

"No, illustrious grand master, I wish to say nothing of the kind, and God keep a poor atom of dust, like myself, from having any opinion in such a matter! No; at this moment I am only a

mere story-teller, and I relate the adventures of Madame Blanche de Bourbon, as the French say, or of Donna Bianca de Borbone, as the Spaniards call her."

"Invulnerable!" muttered Don Frederick.

"So it was," pursued Mothril, "that the guards committed the frightful sacrilege of invading the church, and that they were about to carry away Donna Bianca, when suddenly a knight in complete armour, his vizor down, doubtless the same knight who had assisted the prisoner in her flight, burst, on horseback, into the church."

"On horseback!" cried Agénor.

"Yes, doubtless," replied Mothril, "it was a profanation, but perhaps it might have been a knight on whom his name, his rank, or some military order conferred that right. Many orders of that kind exist in Spain. The grand master of St. Jago, for instance, has the right to enter helmeted and spurred into all the churches of Christendom. Is it not true, noble Don Frederick?"

"Yes," replied Don Frederick, in an undertone, "such is the fact."

"Well," resumed the Moor, "this knight entered the church, repulsed the guards, called all the town to arms, and at his voice the town rose in revolt, chased off the soldiers of the king, Don Pedro, and shut its gates."

"But, since that, the king, my brother, has well revenged himself," said Don Frederick; "and the twenty-two heads which he had struck off in the great square of Toledo have, with good reason, caused him to be surnamed the 'Justiciero.'"

"Yes, but among those twenty-two heads, that of the rebel knight was not included, for who that knight was has never yet been known."

"And what has the king done with Donna Bianca?" asked Agénor.

"Donna Bianca has been sent to the Castle of Xeres, where she remains a prisoner, although she has, perhaps, deservedly incurred a more severe punishment than a prison."

"Noble Moor," said Don Frederick, "it is not for us to decide what punishment or what reward has been deserved by those by whom God has chosen to preside over nations. God only is above them; and to God alone it belongs to punish or reward them."

"Our lord speaks worthily," answered Mothril, crossing his hands over his breast, and bowing his head down on the neck of his horse, "and his humble slave was in the wrong to speak as he has done."

It was at that moment that they arrived at the spot fixed on for the evening's halt, and that they stopped to pitch the tents.

As the Moor withdrew to assist in lowering his litter, Don Frederick drew near to the knight.

"Speak to me no more," said he, with animation, "of anything concerning the king, Donna Bianca, or myself, before that cursed Moor, whom I am every instant tempted to make my dog throttle; speak to me no more on these subjects till our evening meal; we shall then be alone and shall be able to talk at our ease."

"And will not Mothril, the Moor, be then, as he always is, with us?"

"Mothril, the Moor, will be obliged to leave us together; he does not eat with Christians; besides, he has the litter to attend to."

"It is then a treasure which that litter contains?"

"Yes," replied Frederick, with a smile. "You are not mistaken, it contains his treasure."

At this moment Fernando drew near. Agénor had already in that day done so many indiscreet things, that he feared to compromise himself anew.

But his curiosity, although repressed, was only on that account the more active.

Fernando approached to receive the orders of his master: for Don Frederick's tent had now been pitched in the midst of the camp.

"Prepare our repast, good Fernando," said the prince to the young man, "the knight must be both hungry and thirsty."

"I will return afterwards," said Fernando; "you know I have promised never to leave you, and you know to whom I made that promise."

A transient blush rose to the cheeks of the grand master.

"Remain with us, then, my boy," he said, "for you we have no secrets."

The repast was served up under the tent of the grand master; Mothril did not appear at it.

"Now that we are alone," said Agénor, "for it is as if we were alone, since, as you have yourself said, you have no secrets to keep from that young man, tell me, my dear lord, what has happened, so that in future I may not make any such false step, as I have just now done."

Don Frederick cast an anxious glance around him. "A canvass partition is but a feeble rampart to protect a secret," he answered. "One may look in below, and one may hear through it."

"Then," said Mauléon, "let us speak of something else; notwithstanding my very natural curiosity, I will wait. And, besides, were Satan himself to strive to prevent us, we should easily be able to find some moment, in the journey from here to Seville, to exchange some words, without having anything to fear."

"Had you not been so fatigued," said Frederick, "I would have invited you to leave the tent with me, and on foot, armed with our swords, wrapped in our mantles, and accompanied by Fernando, we should have gone to converse in some part of the plain, so open as to give us the certainty, that the Moor, even should he resume his first form of the serpent, should not be able to listen to us, within fifty paces distance."

"My lord," replied Agénor, with that smile which vigour of constitution and the inexhaustible confidence of youth bestow, "I am never tired. Often, when after having chased the isard* all day, on the most lofty peaks of our mountains, I returned in the evening, my noble guardian, Ernauton de Sainte Colombe, would say to me; 'Agénor, the footprint of a bear has been discovered in the mountain, I know its track, will you come and watch for it with me?' I only took the time to put down the game, which I brought with me, and whatever the hour might be, set out again on this new pursuit."

"Let us go, then," said Frederick.

They left their helmets and cuirasses, and wrapt themselves in their mantles, not so much on account of the nights, though these are always cold in mountainous districts, as that they might remain unknown, and leaving their tents, they took the direction which might lead them most speedily out of the camp. The dog wished to follow, but Don Frederick made a sign, and the intelligent animal lay down at the gate of the tent; he was so known to all, that he would have betrayed the incognito of the two friends. At their first steps they were stopped by a sentinel.

"Who is this soldier?" asked Don Frederick of Fernando, making a step backward.

"It is Ramon, the cross-bowman, my lord," answered the page; "I wished that a good watch should be kept around your lordship's bed, and placed, myself, a line of sentinels; I have, as you know, promised to watch over you."

"Then tell him who we are," said the grand master, "there can be no harm in making our name known to him."

Fernando approached the sentinel, and whispered a word in his ear. The soldier shouldered his cross-bow and, respectfully making way, allowed the promenaders to pass.

But they had scarcely gone fifty paces more, when a white and motionless figure shone out from the darkness. The grand master, not knowing who it was, marched straight on the phantom-like appearance. It was a second sentinel, wrapped in a hooded Moorish cloak, and who lowered his lance, saying, in Spanish, but with the guttural accent of the Arabs -

"You pass not here."

"And this man," asked Don Frederick of Fernando; "who is he?"

"I know not," replied Fernando.

"It was not then you who posted him?"

"No; for he is a Moor."

"Allow us to pass," said Don Frederick in Arabic.

The Moor shook his head, and continued to present at the breast of the grand master, the broad and sharp point of his halbert.

"What does this mean? Am I then a prisoner? I, the grand master? I, the prince? Hallo! guards, to my side!"

Fernando on his part drew a gold whistle from his pocket and sounded it.

But before the guards, or even the Spanish sentinel, fifty paces behind the party, could appear, Don Frederick's dog, which, hearing his master's voice, understood that he called for help, ran up rapid and bounding, his hair bristling up, and with a single spring, the spring of a tiger, flew at the Moor, and caught him so sharply by the throat through the folds of his mantle, that the soldier fell down, uttering a cry of alarm.

At the cry of distress, Moors and Spaniards left their tents, the Spaniards held in one hand a torch, in the other their sword; the Moors silently and without lights glided forward in the darkness, like animals of prey.

"Here, Alan!" cried the grand master.

At this call, the dog slowly, and as if with regret, let go its prey and returned with backward steps, and its eyes fixed on the Moor, to crouch at its master's feet, ready to spring forward again, should he give a signal.

At that moment Mothril arrived.

The grand master turned towards him, and with that double majesty which he possessed as a prince in heart as well as in birth, he said, "Who has thought fit to post sentinels in my camp? Reply, Mothril. This man is one of yours. Who has placed him where he is?"

"In your camp, my lord," replied Mothril, with the greatest humility; "Oh! I should never have displayed so much presumption. I only ordered the faithful servant whom you see," and he pointed to the Moor leaning on one knee and holding his bleeding throat with both his hands, "to be on his guard against any nocturnal surprise, and he has either exceeded his orders, or failed to recognise your lordship; but, in any case, if he has offended the brother of my king, and that his offence be deemed worthy of death, he must die."

* A mountain goat.

"Not so," answered Don Frederick. "It is evil intention which makes the culprit, and from the moment that you will answer for his being good Lord Mothril, it is I who owe him a compensation for the attack made by my dog. Fernando, give the man your purse."

Fernando reluctantly drew near the wounded man, and flung him his purse, which he picked up.

"Now, noble Mothril," said Don Frederick, with the air of a man who will not brook the least contradiction to his will, "I thank you for your solicitude, but it is useless; my guards and my sword suffice to defend me; employ then your sword to defend yourself and your litter, and now that you know that I have no longer need of you or yours, return to your tent, Lord Mothril, and sleep in peace."

The Moor bowed, and Don Frederick passed on.

Mothril watched his departure, and when the three forms of the prince, the knight, and the page had disappeared in darkness, he approached the sentinel.

"Are you wounded?" he whispered.

"Yes," said the sentinel, gloomily.

"Severely?"

"The teeth of the cursed beast have entered all their length into my throat."

"Do you suffer?"

"Much."

"Too much to be able to avenge yourself."

"He who avenges himself, suffers no longer; give your orders."

"I will give orders when the time comes; let us depart."

And both returned to the camp.

While Mothril and the wounded soldier returned to the camp, Don Frederick, accompanied by Agénor and Fernando, penetrated into the darkness of the country, of which the Sierra de Estrella formed the horizon; from time to time he sent forth either before or behind him, his dog of unfailing scent, who, had they been followed, would certainly have warned his master of the presence of a spy.

As soon as he thought himself sufficiently remote to prevent the sound of his voice reaching the camp, Don Frederick stopped and laid his hand on the knight's shoulder.

"Listen, Agénor," said he, with that deep accent which shows that the voice comes from the heart, "never speak to me again of the person whose name you have pronounced; if you speak of her before strangers, you will make my forehead blush and my hand tremble; if you speak to me when we are alone, you will make my soul sink within me; that is all I can say. The unfortunate Donna Bianca has not succeeded in gaining the good graces of her royal husband; to that pure and gentle Frenchwoman, he has preferred Maria Padilla, the haughty and ardent Spaniard. A whole lamentable history of suspicion, war, and blood is wrapped up in the few words I have spoken. One day, if need be, I will tell you more; but till then, take heed, Agénor, and speak to me no more of her: I think of her only too much, when she is not spoken of."

At these words, Frederick wrapped himself in his mantle as if to confine some vast grief and bury it within himself.

Agénor remained pensive near the grand master; he strove by recalling his recollections to penetrate those portions of his friend's secret in which he might be useful to him, and to which he understood that the appeal made to him, was not foreign.

The grand master understood what was passing in Agénor's heart.

"This is what I wished to tell you, my friend," he added; "you will live henceforward near me, and as certainly I shall have no precautions to take against my brother, without my speaking to you of her, without your speaking to me, you will ultimately sound this abyss which fills me with dread; but for the present, we are going to Seville, the festival of a tournament awaits me, the king, my brother, wishes, as he says, to do me honour, and, in fact, he has sent me, as you see, Don Mothril, his councillor and his friend."

Fernando shrugged his shoulders, in sign at once of hatred and contempt.

"I obey, therefore," replied Frederick, answering his own thought; "but, in quitting Coimbra, I already entertained suspicions; these suspicions have been confirmed by the watchfulness which I see exerted around me. I have not two eyes only, I have also those of my devoted servant, Fernando; and if Fernando leaves me for some secret and indispensable mission, you will, at least, remain, since I love you both with equal friendship."

And Don Frederick held to each of the young men, a hand which Agénor placed respectfully on his heart, and which Fernando covered with kisses.

"My lord," said Mauléon, "I am happy to love and be beloved thus, but I come very late to take my part of so warm a friendship."

"You shall be our brother," said Don Frederick, "you shall enter into our heart, as we into yours; and now let us only speak of the entertainments and the fine lance strokes which await us at Seville. Come and let us return to the camp."

Behind the first tent which he passed, Don Frederick found Mothril on his feet and awake; he stopped and looked at the Moor without being able to dissemble the annoyance caused him by this sort of importunity.

"My lord," said the Moor, to Don Frederick, "seeing that no one sleeps in the camp, a thought strikes me; since the days are so burning, might it not be agreeable to your highness to resume your journey? The moon has risen, the night is mild and splendid, it would be abridging, by so much, the king, your brother's, impatience."

"But you?" said Frederick, "but your litter?"

"Oh! my lord," replied the Moor, "I and mine are at your lordship's orders."

"Let us go, then, I am well content," said Frederick, "give the orders for departure."

While the horses and mules were being saddled, and the tents struck, Mothril approached the wounded sentinel.

"If we made ten leagues this night," he asked, "should we have crossed the first chain of mountains?"

"Yes," replied the soldier.

"And if we leave to-morrow about seven in the evening, at what hour shall we be at the ford of the Zézère?"

"At eleven."

At the hour which the soldier had mentioned, they had arrived at the spot of encampment. This manner of travelling, as the Moor had foreseen, had been agreeable to all, and he had been a special gainer in being able more easily to withdraw his litter, from the prying glance of Musaron.

For one single pre-occupation possessed the worthy squire - it was to know what species of

treasure was contained in the gilt box which Mothril guarded with so much care.

So, like a true child of French soil, he took no heed of the requirements of the climate under which he now was, but during the greatest heat of the day, began to prowl about the tent.

The sun sent forth vertical rays; the camp was entirely deserted. Frederick, to give himself up wholly to his thoughts, had withdrawn to his tent: Fernando and Agénor were chatting in theirs, when they suddenly saw Musaron appear on the threshold. The squire had the smiling look of a man who had almost attained an object long sought after.

"Sir Agénor," said he, "I have made a great discovery."

"What is it?" asked the knight, accustomed to the facetious rallies of his squire.

"It is that Don Mothril speaks to the litter, and that his litter answers him."

"And what do they say?" asked the knight.

"I have heard the conversation, well enough, but I have not been able to understand it," said Musaron, "as the Moor and his litter speak Arabic."

The knight shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you say to that, Fernando?" he asked. "Here, if you believe Musaron, is the assure of Don Mothril which speaks."

"There is nothing surprising in that," replied the page, "as the treasure of Don Mothril is a woman."

"Ah!" said Musaron, somewhat out of countenance.

"Young?" asked Agénor, with animation.

"Probably so."

"Beautiful?"

"Ah! you ask more than I can tell, sir knight, and it is a question to which few persons, even of the suite of Don Mothril could give an answer."

"Well! I will learn," said Agénor.

"How so?"

"As Musaron has succeeded in gaining the tent, I can well gain it myself. We are accustomed, we mountain hunters, to glide from rock to rock, and surprise the isards at the summits of our peaks. The Lord Don Mothril will not be more subtle, nor more wary than an isard."

"So be it!" said Fernando, carried away by the buoyancy of hair-brained youth; "but on one condition—that I go with you."

"Let us go, and during the time, Musaron will be on the watch."

Agénor was not mistaken, nor were so many precautions found necessary. It was eleven in the forenoon. An African sun darted its burning rays, the camp appeared deserted; the Spanish and Moorish sentinels had sought the shade either of a rock, or of a solitary tree, so that had it not been for the tents which gave a momentary appearance of habitation to the landscape, one might have believed oneself in a desert. The tent of Don Mothril was the most remote. To isolate it the more, or to give it a little more coolness, he had pitched it against a clump of trees. Into this tent he had introduced his litter, and before the gate dropped a large piece of Turkish stuff, which prevented the eye from penetrating into the interior. Musaron pointed out this tent as that which inclosed the treasure. Immediately, the two young men leaving Musaron where he stood, and where he could see all that passed on the side of the tent looking towards the camp, made a circuit and reached the extremity of the wood; once arrived there, holding their breath, stepping

on tiptoe, carefully putting aside the branches whose rustling would have betrayed their presence, they went forward, and unheard by Don Mothril succeeded in reaching the circular canvass, in the centre of which were Don Mothril and his litter. They could not see, but they could hear.

"Oh!" said Agénor; "the conversation will not tell us much, for they speak Arabic."

Fernando carried his finger to his lips.

"I understand Arabic," said he, "let me listen."

The page listened, and the knight remained silent.

"'Tis strange," said Fernando after an instant's attention, "they are speaking of you."

"Of me!" said Agénor; "impossible."

"'Tis so indeed, I am not mistaken."

"And what do they say?"

"Don Mothril alone has hitherto spoken. He has just asked, Is it the knight with the red plume?"

At the moment that the page finished these words a voice of melodious vibration, one of those voices which seem to distil amber and pearls, and which wake an echo in the heart, answered,

"Yes, it is the knight with the red plume, he is young and handsome."

"Young, doubtless," answered Mothril, "for he is scarcely twenty years of age; but handsome, that I must deny."

"He bears his arms well and appears valiant."

"Valiant, a plunderer! a Pyrenean vulture, come to swoop down on the carcass of our Spain."

"What does he say?" asked Agénor.

The page repeated to him with a smile, the Moor's words.

The knight's forehead flushed; he put his hand to his sword's hilt and half drew it from the scabbard.

Fernando stopped him.

"Sir Knight," said he, "such are the wages of indiscretion; but without doubt I shall suffer in my turn; let us listen."

The sweet voice resumed still in Arabic.

"He is the first French knight whom I have seen. Excuse me, therefore, for being a little curious. The French knights are, it is said, renowned for their country. Is this one in the king, Don Pedro's service?"

"Aïssa," said Mothril, in a tone of concentrated anger, "speak to me no more of that young man."

"It was you who first spoke to me of him," replied the voice, "when we met in the mountain, and after having promised me that we should halt under the trees, where he had forestalled us, pressed me, fatigued as I was, to undergo further fatigue, that I might arrive at Coimbra before the French knight should be able to speak to Frederick."

Fernando placed his hand on the knight's arm; it seemed as if the veil was being torn and revealing the Moor's secret.

"What does he say now?" asked the knight.

Fernando repeated to him what Mothril had said, word for word.

However, the same voice went on with a tone which went to the knight's heart, although he did not understand the words.

"If he is not valiant," said she, "why do you seem to dread him so much?"

"I mistrust the whole world and dread no one," replied Mothril. "Further, I consider it useless that you should busy yourself about a man whom you will soon see no longer."

Mothril pronounced these last words with a tone which left no doubt as to their meaning, and Agénor understood from the movement made by the page that he had surprised some important secret.

"Be on your guard, Sire de Mauléon," he said. "Whether from political causes, or from jealous hatred, you have an enemy in Don Mothril."

Agénor smiled disdainfully.

Both recommenced listening, but they heard nothing further. Some seconds afterwards, they perceived, through the trees, Mothril, who had left and was going in the direction of Don Frederick's tent.

"It appears to me," said Agénor, "that now would be the moment to see and speak to this beautiful Aïssa, who has so much sympathy for the knights of France."

"To see her, yes," said Fernando; "to speak to her, no. For be assured that Mothril has not gone away without leaving his guards at the door."

And with the point of his dagger he made a narrow opening in the seam of the tent; not so narrow, however, but that it allowed a look to penetrate the interior.

Aïssa reposed on a couch of purple stuff embroidered with gold, she was buried in one of those silent and smiling reveries, peculiar to the women of the east, whose entire existence is absorbed in physical sensations. One of her hands held that musical instrument which is called the guzla; the other was buried amidst her black tresses braided with pearls, which gave more effect to her slender fingers with their nails stained with carmine. A searching and humid glance, which appeared to seek that it might dwell on the object she saw in her mind, streamed through the silken fringes of her eyelids.

"How beautiful she is!" whispered Agénor.

"Sir knight," said Fernando, "consider, she is a Moresca, consequently, an enemy of our holy religion."

"Pshaw!" said Agénor. "I will convert her."

At that moment, Musaron was heard to cough. It was the signal agreed on, if any one approached the wood; and the two young men, with the same precautions they had previously employed, returned by the road they had come. Arrived at the skirt of the wood, they saw, coming by the road of Seville, a small troop, consisting of a dozen Arab and Castilian horsemen. The troop went straight to Mothril, who, having perceived them, had halted some paces from the tent of the grand master. The horsemen came on the part of Don Pedro, and brought a new dispatch for his brother. This dispatch was accompanied by a letter for Mothril. The Moor read the letter addressed to him, and entered Don Frederick's tent, inviting the new comers to wait an instant, in case it should please the grand master to ask for some explanation.

"Again!" said Don Frederick, perceiving Mothril at the door of his tent.

"My lord," said the Moor, "it is a message from our honoured sovereign, which gives me the boldness to come into your presence; it is addressed to you and I would not delay transmitting it."

And he held out the letter to Don Frederick, who took it with some hesitation. But on reading the first lines, the forehead of the grand master brightened.

The dispatch said:—"My well-beloved brother, hasten, for my court is already filled with knights

of all nations. Seville rejoices in the expectation of the arrival of the valiant grand master of St. James. Those whom you bring with you shall be welcome, but cumber not your progress with too long an escort. I shall glory in seeing you, and my happiness depends on seeing you speedily."

At that moment, Fernando and Agénor, who felt some anxiety on seeing this new troop approaching Don Frederick's tent, entered in their turn.

"See," said Don Frederick, holding out the king's letter to Agénor, "read, and see the reception which awaits us."

"Has your highness no words of welcome for those who have brought that letter?" asked Mothril.

Don Frederick made a sign of the head and went out; then, when he had thanked them for the promptitude they had shown, for he had just learnt that they had come from Seville in five days, Mothril, addressing the chief, said:—"I shall keep your soldiers to do more honour to the grand master. For your own part, return to the king, Don Pedro, with the velocity of the swallow, and announce to him that the prince is on the march to Seville."

Then in a whisper:—"Go," he said, "and tell the king, that I shall not return without the proof which I promised him."

The Arab horseman bowed, and without replying a word, or stopping to refresh himself and his horse, he started like an arrow.

This whispered instruction did not escape Fernando's notice, and although ignorant of the subject, for he had not heard Mothril's voice, he thought it right to tell his master, that the departure of this chief immediately after his arrival appeared the more suspicious to him, since he was a Moor and not a Castilian.

"Listen," said Frederick, "when they were together, the danger, if such there be, can menace neither me, nor you, nor Agénor; we are strong men who fear not danger. But there is at the castle of Medina Sidonia, a weak and defenceless being, a woman, who has already only too much suffered for me, and on my account. It is necessary that you depart; it is necessary that you leave me; it is necessary that by some means, the choice of which I leave to your address, that you should gain her presence, and warn her to be on her guard. All that I should not be able to say in a letter, you will tell her by word of mouth."

"I will leave whenever you wish," answered Fernando; "you know that I am at your orders."

Frederick sat down to a table, and wrote on a parchment some lines, which he sealed with his signet; as he concluded, the inevitable Mothril re-entered the tent.

"You see," said Don Frederick, "I, on my own behalf, write also to the king, Don Pedro. It has seemed to me giving but a cold reception to his letter, to allow your messenger to depart with a merely verbal answer. To-morrow morning, Fernando will leave."

The Moor replied only by a bow; the grand master enclosed the parchment, in his presence, within a little bag, embroidered with fine pearls, which he delivered to the page.

"You know what is to be done," he said.

"Yes, my lord, I am aware of it."

"But," said Mothril, "as your highness has good intentions in favour of the French knight, why not send him instead of the page, who must be necessary to you. I would have him escorted by four of my followers, and by delivering to the



king, the letter, his brother's letter, he would at once have earned those favours, which it is your intention to solicit for him."

The cunning of the Moor perplexed Don Frederick for an instant, but Fernando came to his assistance.

"It seems to me," said he to Don Frederick, "it seems to me, that a Spaniard should be sent to the King of Castile. Besides, your highness's choice first fell upon me, and unless an absolute order is given to the contrary, I should desire to retain the honour of the mission."

"'Tis well," replied Don Frederick; "we will make no change in our decision."

"His highness is the master," replied Mothril, "and we, whatever we are, have no other duty than that of fulfilling his commands, and I now come to receive them."

"Or what subject?"

"For our departure; was it not settled that we should travel during the night, as we did yesterday? Has your highness been incommoded with that nocturnal march?"

"Not so; quite otherwise."

"Well, then, we have no longer more than on or two hours of daylight left," resumed Mothril "it would therefore be time to depart."

"Give the orders, and I shall be ready."

Mothril left.

"Listen!" said Don Frederick to Fernando; "we have to cross the river which descends from the Sierra d'Estrella, and which flows into the Tagus. There is always at the moment of passing rivers an instant of confusion; you will take advantage of it when you have once reached the opposite bank to immediately distance our body; for I think not, that you, more than I are desirous of the escort offered by the Moor

Only be very wary during the journey, still more wary when you have reached the spot, for you know that *she* is rigorously watched."

"Yes, my lord, I know it."

Mothril lost not an instant in giving the necessary orders. The caravan resumed its march in the usual order; that is, first came an advanced guard of Moorish horsemen to explore the way; then came Don Frederick, watched over by Mothril; lastly came the litter and the rear guard.

About ten at night they had crossed the Sierra, and were descending into the valley. An hour later, they could perceive through the trees growing on the mountain's slope, a bluish stripe like a long and winding ribbon, on which the moon, at different spots, threw out a million sparkles.

"'Tis the Zèzère," said Mothril; "with the permission of your highness, I will have the ford sounded."

This gave Don Frederick an opportunity of being for an instant with Agénor and Fernando.

Mothril, it is known, did not march without his litter; he therefore made a circuit towards the rear-guard, and then was seen to advance, accompanying that treasure which had so much engrossed Musaron, while he remained ignorant of its nature.

"It is now my turn to ask permission of your highness," said Agénor; "we Frenchmen are accustomed to pass any river we find in our way; I wish to arrive at the opposite bank at the same time as the Moor."

This gave an opportunity to Don Frederick to give his final instructions to Fernando, without any one overhearing them.

"Do as you will," he said to the knight, "but do not expose yourself uselessly; you know that I have need of you."

"My lord," said Agénor, "we shall be met with on the opposite bank."

By making in a converse sense the same in suit described by the Moor and his litter, the knight followed by Musaron, disappeared in the windings of the mountain.

CHAPTER V.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RIVER.

THE Moor having left the first, was the first to reach the river's brink.

Doubtless, whether in his journey to Coimbra, or during some other, he had sounded the ford which he came to explore, for without any hesitation he descended to the river's brink, losing himself half way up his body amid the rose-laurels which, in the southern parts of Spain and Portugal, almost always skirt rivers. On a sign from him, the guides of the litter took both their mules by the bridle, and after leaving the road which they were to follow pointed out to them by Mothril, which was rendered easy by a little grove of orange trees lying in that direction, they entered the river and prepared to cross it, an operation which they effected without the water reaching higher than their mules' bellies. Notwithstanding the certainty which Mothril appeared to possess regarding the safety of the ford, he still followed their passage with his eyes, until he had seen his precious litter in safety on the other bank.

Then only, he looked around him, and stooping down to the level of the rose-laurels: "Are you there?" he asked.

"Yes," replied a voice.

"You can recognise the page well, can you not?"

"'Twas he who whistled on the dog. The letter is in a bag which he carried hung by his side in a little pouch. It is that pouch which I require."

"You shall have it," replied the Moor.

"Then, I can hail him? You are at your post? I will be there when the time comes."

Mothril mounted up the bank, and returned to Don Frederick and Fernando.

During this time, Agénor and Musaron had arrived on their side at the slope of the river, and as he had said, without caring for the depth of water, the knight had bravely spurred his horse into the current.

The river had little depth near its banks. The knight and his squire only became immersed slowly and gradually. When the passage was three-fourths made, the horse lost its footing; but sustained by the bridle and by the encouragement of its rider, it swam vigorously, and found earth again about twenty paces from the spot where it had lost it. Musaron followed his master like his shadow; and after having performed about the same manœuvre, arrived like him safe and sound, at the other side of the current. According to his custom, he wished to congratulate himself aloud on this feat, but his master, by pressing his finger to his lips, enjoined silence. Both then gained the bank without other sound being heard than the splashing of the water, and without any sign having made the knight's passage known to Mothril.

Once arrived, Agénor stopped, alighted, and flung his horse's bridle into Musaron's hands; then describing a circle, he gained the other extremity of the orange grove, before which he could see the moon's rays playing on the gilded cornice of the litter; besides, had he not seen where it was, he could easily have found it. The vibrating sounds of the guzla echoed through the night, and showed that Aïssa, to beguile the time till her guardian should have passed in his turn, had had recourse to that instrument.

At first they were only chords without connection, a sort of vague complaint which the absent fingers of the musician addressed to the winds. But to these chords succeeded words, and to the knight's great joy he recognised that these words, though translated from the Arabic, were sung in the purest Castilian. The beautiful Aïssa then knew Spanish. The knight would then speak to her; he continued to approach, guided this time by the music and the voice.

Aïssa had opened the curtains of her litter on the side looking from the river, and the two guides, in obedience no doubt to their master's orders, had withdrawn to twenty paces distance in the rear. The young girl reclined in the palanquin, lighted by the purest ray of the moon, whose path she followed through a cloudless sky. Her posture, like that of all the girls of the east, was full of natural grace and deep-seated voluptuousness. She appeared to inhale through all her pores, those perfumes of the night which a warm southern breeze bore from Ceuta towards Portugal. As to her song, 'twas one of those Oriental compositions.*

* C'était l'heure du soir, c'était l'heure voilée
Où, suspendant son vol,
Sur la branche déserte, au fond de la vallée,
Chante le rossignol.

C'était l'heure du soir, c'était l'heure tardive
Où s'efface tout bruit,
Où la rose inclinée offre, ainsi qu'à la rive,
Son parfum à la nuit.

"It was the hour of eve, the veiled hour, when the nightingale ceasing to fly, sings on the lonely branch in the depth of the valley."

"It was the hour of eve, the late hour when all around is hushed, when the drooping rose gives out its perfume on the river's brink, as an incense to the night."

"The air ceased its songs, the water hushed its murmur, all things listened, and the star itself listened to the pure voice of the bird that sang."

"He sang to the rose: Oh, flower of woman, why only open at evening? She answered: Why offer your song to souls only when heaven is darkened?"

"He replied: My song is for the flower of the river's brink, which only opens by night. And my perfume is for the bird whose timid notes are born when noise is hushed."

"And in one soft mystery, the night blended the songs and perfumes of the heart. And morning saw the bird alighted on the earth, near the flower."

As she finished the last words, and while the last chords vibrated harmoniously through the air, the knight, incapable of longer mastering his impatience, appeared in the empty space illumined by the rays of the moon, which intervened between the wood and the litter. A woman of the west on seeing a man thus suddenly emerge, would have cried out and called for help. The beautiful Moresca did neither the one nor the other; she rose on her left hand, and drew with the right a little dagger which she carried in her girdle; but almost immediately recognising the knight, she returned the poniard to its sheath, allowed her head to fall on one of her softly-rounded hands, and approaching the other to her lips, made him a sign to come forward without noise. Agénor obeyed. The long draperies of the litter, the trappings which covered the mules, formed a sort of wall, which rendered him invisible to the two guides, who were besides intent on the preparations made on the other bank for the passage of Fernando and Don Frederick; he therefore boldly approached the young girl's hand which was hanging out of the litter; he took it, and bringing it to his lips, said, "Aïssa loves me, and I love Aïssa."

"Are those of your country then necromancers," she answered, "thus to read in the hearts of women secrets which they have only uttered to night and solitude?"

"No," said the knight; "but they know that love calls to love. Have I been so unfortunate as to deceive myself?"

"You well know otherwise," answered the young girl. "Since Don Mothril has led me in his train, and has guarded me as if I were his wife, and not his daughter, I have seen the noblest Moorish and Castilian knights pass by me, without caring to turn my eyes from the pearls of my bracelet, or to detach my thoughts from prayer."

L'air cessait tous ses chants, l'eau cessait son murmure,
Toute chose écoutait,
Et l'étoile elle-même écoutait la voix p' re
De l'oiseau qui chantait.

Il disait à la rose: Oh! pourquoi, fleur des femmes,
Ne t'ouvres-tu qu'au soir?
Elle disait: Pourquoi n'offrir ton chant aux âmes
Que quand le ciel est noir?

Il répondait: Mon chant est à la fleur des rives
Qui s'ouvre pour la nuit.
— Mon parfum à l'oiseau dont les notes craintives
Sont quand meurt le bruit.

Et la nuit confondait avec un doux mystère
Parfums et chants du cœur.
Et le matin trouva descendu sur la terre
L'oiseau près de la fleur.

But it has not been with regard to you as to other men; from the moment I met you on the mountain I have wished to descend from my palanquin, and to follow you. It may surprise you that I talk thus; but I am not a child of the towns; I am a flower of solitude, and, as the flower gives its perfume to him who plucks it, and then dies, so will I give you my love if you wish it, and die if you will not accept it."

As Agénor was the first man on whom the beautiful Moresca had cast her eyes, so was she the first woman who, by harmony of look, voice, and gesture, had so sweetly appealed to his heart. He, therefore, was about to respond to this strange avowal, which, far from offering resistance, thus made the first step towards him, when suddenly a deep and agonising cry of pain resounded, and made both Agénor and the young girl tremble. At the same time the voice of the grand master crying from the other bank,

"Help, Agénor! help!—Fernando is drowning."

The young girl, by a rapid movement, almost stepped from her palanquin, touched the young man's forehead with her lips, and said to him these few words—"I shall see you again, shall I not?"

"Oh! on my soul," said Agénor.

"Go, then, to the page's help," she said.

And she pressed him back with one hand, while with the other she closed her curtains.

By a short circuit the knight reached the river's bank in two bounds. In an instant he unfastened his sword and spurs. As, happily, he was without his armour, he rushed to the point where the commotion of the water showed that the page had disappeared.

This is what had passed: After having, as we have already mentioned, seen his litter pass over, and given his instructions to the Moor hidden amid the rose laurels, Mothril had returned to find the grand master and Fernando, who, at a hundred paces from the bank, waited with the rest of their suite.

"My lord," the Moor had said, "the ford is found, and, as your highness may see, the litter has arrived at the opposite bank without any accident. However, for still greater surety, I will first guide your page over, then yourself; my men will pass afterwards."

This offer answered so well the desires of the grand master, that he could not entertain to it the slightest objection. In fact, nothing could better promote the execution of the project agreed on between Fernando and Don Frederick.

"'Tis well," he said to Mothril, "Fernando will pass over first, and as he is to precede us on the route to Seville, he will pursue his way, while we complete the passage of the river."

Mothril bowed, as a sign that he saw no hindrance to this desire of the grand master.

"Have you anything to communicate to the king, Don Pedro, my brother, by the same opportunity?" asked Don Frederick.

"No, my lord," answered the Moor; "my messenger has left, and will arrive before yours."

"'Tis well," said Don Frederick; "take the lead."

The grand master devoted the brief space which remained between him and the river to a tender and prudent exhortation to Fernando; he had much affection for this page, whom he had had near his person from a child; and the young man was also deeply attached to him. Accordingly Don Frederick had not hesitated, young as he was,

to render him the confidant of his most secret affairs.

Mothril waited at the river's brink. All was calm. The landscape lighted by the moon, and broken by the great mountain shadows, here and there illumined by the glittering reflection of the river, appeared to belong to one of those fairy kingdoms which are seen in dreams. The most mistrustful man would have been re-assured by that silence and nocturnal limpidity, and would not, even if forewarned, have believed in the presence of danger.

Fernando, accordingly, naturally brave and adventurous, as is usual at his age, felt not the slightest fear, and urged his horse into the river on the track of the Moor's mule.

Mothril marched first. During the first fifteen paces, the horse and mule had their footing; but the Moor, by slight degrees, inclined to the right.

"You are leaving the road, Mothril!" cried Don Frederick from the bank. "Have a care, Fernando—have a care!"

"Fear not, my lord," replied Mothril, "since I take the lead. Were there any danger, I should be the first to recognise its presence."

The reply was plausible. Therefore, although the Moor was gradually more and more diverging from the straight track, Fernando conceived no suspicion. Besides, he thought it might be a means employed by his guide to break more easily the force of the current.

The Moor's mule lost footing, and Fernando's horse began to swim; but it mattered little to the page, who was swimmer enough to cross the river himself, had he been obliged to use his own exertions.

The grand master continued to observe the passage with increasing anxiety.

"You oblique, Mothril!" he cried—"you oblique. Keep to your left, Fernando."

But Fernando, who felt his beast swimming vigorously, and who besides was always preceded by the Moor, harboured no fear during this passage, which he looked on merely as sport, and turning round in the saddle, replied to his master—

"Fear nothing, my lord, I take the safe road since the noble Don Mothril shows the way."

But as he made this movement, a singular vision appeared to him; he believed that he saw in the track left by his horse, a man's head which plunged immediately he turned round.

"Lord Mothril," he said to the Moor, "it seems to me indeed that we deceive ourselves. It is not here that your litter passed and if I am not deceived, I see it down there with the moon's rays shining on it, close by the orange grove, and altogether to our left."

"It is only a small extent of greater depth," replied the Moor, "and in an instant we shall regain the land."

"But you are wandering from the track, you are wrong," cried again Don Frederick, but already from such a distance that his voice scarcely reached the boy.

"Tis so truly," said Fernando, beginning to conceive some anxiety on seeing the vain efforts made by his horse, carried, as by some unknown force, into the current, while Mothril, master of his mule, remained at some distance on his left.

"Lord Mothril," cried the page, "there is some treachery in this matter."

Scarcely had he uttered these words, than his horse gave a sudden groan, and, staggering to one side, beat the water with violence, but without

swimming, as previously, with his right leg. Immediately afterwards he gave another plaintive neigh, and ceased to swim with his left leg. Then being only kept up by his two front feet, the animal gradually sunk his hind quarters under the water.

Fernando saw that the moment had come to spring into the river, but he vainly strove to quit his stirrups; he felt himself bound to the horse.

"Help! help!" cried Fernando.

It was that cry of pain which Agénor heard, and which drew him from the ecstasy in which he was lapped by the aspect and voice of the beautiful Moresca.

In fact the horse continued to submerge; his nostrils alone rose over the river's surface, and snorted loudly, while his forefeet made the water spout up all around him.

Fernando wished to cry for help a second time, but carried away by that hidden force, which he had previously striven in vain to resist, he followed his horse into the depths; his hand only raised up to heaven, as if to demand vengeance or succour, waved for an instant above the surface of the gulf, but, like the rest of the body, it speedily disappeared, and nought was seen save an agitation mounting from the bottom of the river to its surface, where numerous bloody bubbles rose and burst.

Two friends had sprung forward to Fernando's assistance; on the one hand, as we have already said, Agénor; on the other, the mountain dog, accustomed to obey the voice of the page, almost as faithfully as his master's.

Both sought in vain, although two or three times Agénor had seen the dog plunge in the same direction; at the third time the animal re-appeared, holding a shred of cloth in his breathless jaws. But as if, in tearing off this shred, he had done all that he could do, he swam towards the bank, and crouching at his master's feet, gave one of those mournful and despairing howls which, when they occur during night, make the firmest hearts tremble—that shred of cloth was all that remained of the unfortunate Fernando.

The night was passed in useless search. Don Frederick, who had traversed the river without mishap, remained all night on the bank. He could not resolve to quit that moving sepulchre from which every moment he hoped to see his friend come forth.

His dog howled at his feet.

Agénor, gloomy and thoughtful, held in hand the fragment of cloth brought back by the dog, and appeared to wait for daylight with impatience.

Mothril who on his part had long remained crouching amid the rose-laurels as if looking for the young man, had returned with a countenance of despair, repeating "Allah! allah!" and seeking to console the grand master with those common-place phrases which are a grief the more to one who suffers.

Day broke; its first rays lighted on Agénor, seated at the feet of Don Frederick: it was clear that the knight impatiently awaited that moment, for scarcely had the first rays pierced through the entrance of the tent, than he approached that opening and looked with profound attention at the fragment of cloth torn from the doublet of the unfortunate page.

This examination no doubt confirmed his suspicions, for mournfully shaking his head—

"My lord," he said to the grand master, "this

is a very lamentable, and, above all, a very extraordinary occurrence."

"Yes," replied Frederick, "very lamentable and very extraordinary! Why has Providence visited me with such a misfortune?"

"My lord," said Agénor, "I do not think it is Providence that is to be accused in all this. Look on this last relic of the friend whom you weep for."

"My eyes would be worn away in looking at it," said Don Frederick, "and with weeping while I looked."

"But do you see nothing in it, my lord?"

"What mean you?"

"I mean that the doublet of the unfortunate Fernando was white as an angel's robe; I mean that the river water is limpid and clear as crystal, and yet, look, my lord, the tint of this shred is ruddy. There is blood on this cloth."

"Blood!"

"Yes, my lord."

"Alan must have hurt himself in trying to hold up his friend; for you see he has the same stain of blood on his head."

"I first thought as you do, my lord, but I have looked in vain for the trace of a wound. The blood does not come from the dog."

"May it not be that Fernando had struck against some rock?"

"My lord, I dived in the spot where he disappeared, and all around there was more than twenty feet deep of water. But hold, here is something which may serve to guide us. See you this rent in the fragment of cloth?"

"It is the mark of the dog's tooth."

"Not so, my lord; for here very plainly is the place where the dog has caught. This is an opening made by an edged weapon: by the blade of a poniard."

"Oh! how frightful an idea!" cried Don Frederick, rising pale, his hair on end, with rage and horror in his looks; "you are right! you are right! Fernando was an excellent swimmer; his horse reared among my stud, he has a hundred times traversed bodies of water of far greater rapidity than this. There is a crime, Agénor—there is a crime!"

"I should have no doubt of it, my lord, could I see a cause."

"Ah! 'tis true. You know not, for your part, that on reaching this bank, Fernando was to leave me, not to rejoin the king, Don Pedro, as I had said to the Moor who must have disbelieved me, but to fulfil a mission which I had entrusted to him. My poor friend! my sure and faithful confidant, whose heart was only open for me! Alas, it is for me, and through me, that he meets his death."

"Even were it so, my lord, it is the duty of all of us to die for your highness."

"Oh! who can tell," muttered Don Frederick, communing with his own thoughts, "the frightful consequences which that death may produce."

"Why am I not your friend in the same measure as Fernando?" sadly uttered the knight.

"I should inherit the confidence which he enjoyed, and serve you as he served you."

"Agénor, you are unjust," said the prince, holding out his hand, and looking at him with that extraordinary sweetness of expression which one was always astonished to see on the countenance of such a man. "I had made two parts of my heart, one for you, the other for Fernando. Fernando being dead, you henceforward become my only friend, and I intend to prove it to you, by

telling you what was the nature of the mission on which Fernando was to be sent by me. He was to carry a letter to your countrywoman, to the queen, Donna Bianca."

"Ah! that is the cause," said Agénor, "and where was that letter?"

"That letter was in the pouch which he carried hung to his waist. If Fernando have really been assassinated, and I now believe with you, that he has been; if the assassins have dragged the corpse, which has not been discovered, to some unfrequented and distant bank of the river, my secret is discovered, and we are lost."

"But if this be the case, my lord," said Agénor, "go not to Seville. Fly! you are still near enough to Portugal to regain, without mishap, your good town of Coimbra, and place yourself in safety behind its ramparts."

"Not to go to Seville, is to abandon *her*: to fly is to awake suspicions which do not exist, if the death of Fernando be only an ordinary accident. Besides, Don Pedro holds Donna Bianca, and through her, holds me. I will go to Seville."

"But in what way can I then serve you?" asked the knight. "Can I not replace Fernando? Can you not give me a letter similar to that which you gave him, and a token which may promise me recognition? I am no boy of sixteen; I wear no doublet of thin cloth lined with silk; I have a stout cuirass, and one which has blunted poniards more dangerous than all the kandjars and all the yatagans of your Moors. Give me your letter. I will make my way, and if any man might need eight days to reach her, she shall have, I promise you, your letter within four days."

"Thanks! my brave Frenchman. But if the king be forewarned, the danger becomes doubled. The means which I wished to employ has not been good, since God has not willed that it should succeed. We will now take counsel of circumstances. We will continue our journey as if nothing had happened. At two days' march from Seville and at a moment when the affair is out of mind, you will leave me, you will make a circuit, and while I enter Seville by one gate, you will enter it by another. Then in the evening, you will glide into the royal Alcazar, where you will remain hidden in the first court, that which is shaded by majestic plantains, and in the midst of which there is a marble fountain with lions' heads; you will see windows with purple curtains, they mark the apartment I occupy when I visit my brother. At midnight, come under those windows; I shall then know, from the reception met with from Don Pedro, what we have to fear, or to hope. I will speak to you, and if I cannot speak, I will fling you a note which will tell you what it is needful to do. Swear only to execute on the instant, whatever I may tell you, be it by word of mouth, or be it in writing."

"I swear on my soul, my lord," said Agénor, "that I will fulfil your will in every point."

"'Tis well!" said Don Frederick, "I now feel more tranquillised. Poor Fernando!"

"My lord," said Mothril, appearing at the entrance of the tent, "does your highness recollect that we have performed this night only one half of our journey? If it please you to order our departure, we shall arrive within three or four hours, under shelter of a forest, which I know from having already halted there on my journey hither, and we would there pass away the heat of the day."

"Let us leave," said Don Frederick; "nothing retains me longer here, now that I have lost all

hope of seeing Fernando again. And the caravan resumed its march, not however, without the grand master and the knight often turning their eyes back to the river, and often repeating also, like a sigh of pain from their heart:

"Poor Fernando! poor Fernando!"

Thus continued Don Frederick's journey to Seville.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW MOTHIL ANTICIPATED THE GRAND MASTER WITH THE KING, DON PEDRO, OF CASTILE.

THERE are towns which, from the natural situation they occupy, and from the treasures of beauty with which men have enriched them, appear to be not only in fact, but of right, queens of the country which surrounds them; such is Seville, that queen of beautiful Andalusia, itself one of the royal countries of Spain. And thus the Moors who had rejoicingly conquered and lovingly preserved it, quitted it with grief, leaving it that eastern crown which, during three centuries they had placed on its head. One of the palaces, with which during their sojourn they had endowed this favourite sultana was that which Don Pedro now inhabited, and into which we are about to introduce our readers.

On a marble terrace, where the odorous trees of the orange and the lemon, form, with pomegranate trees and myrtles, a vault so thick that the rays of the sun fail to pierce it, Moorish slaves are waiting till the burning beams of day shall have extinguished their flames in the sea. Then the evening breeze arises; the slaves sprinkle the marble pavement with rose and benzoin water, and the passing breeze wafts through the air natural and factitious perfumes, mingled like ornament and beauty. Moorish slaves then bring under the cover formed by the hanging gardens of this other Babylon, beds of silk, and downy cushions, for with the night, Spain will revive, with the coolness of evening, streets, walks, and terraces will become re-peopled.

Soon the tapestry which separates the terrace from a vast apartment is raised, and a man appears with a beautiful woman leaning on his arm. She is from twenty-four to twenty-five years of age, with glossy black hair, black eyes, and that smooth brown skin, which is the fresh complexion of southern women; he, on the other hand, is twenty-eight years of age, fair, of tall stature, and bears in his blue eyes and in his complexion, which the sun of Spain has failed to tan, indelible characteristics of northern European race.

That woman is Donna Maria Padilla, that man the king, Don Pedro.

Both came forward silently under the canopy of verdure, but it was easy to perceive that their silence arose not from the absence, but rather from over fullness of thought.

The beautiful Spaniard further has not a look either for the Moors who wait her orders, or for all the splendour which surrounds her. Although born amid mediocrity,* almost amid want, she has been accustomed to all that is most dazzling in royal luxury, since she has played, as a child plays with a toy, with the sceptre of the King of Castile.

"Pedro," she said at last, breaking the first that silence which both seemed to hesitate break-

ing, "you are wrong in pretending that I am honoured as your friend and mistress; I am an humbled slave, that is all, my lord."

Pedro smiled, and gave a slight shrug with his shoulders.

"Yes, doubtless," resumed Maria, "an humbled slave. I have said, and I repeat it."

"How so? explain yourself," said the king.

"Oh! 'tis very easy, my lord. Here is the grand master of St. James coming, it is said, to Seville, for a tourney which you are preparing. His apartment, augmented at the expense of mine, is adorned with the most precious tapestries, and the finest furniture, which has been removed from the different rooms of the palace."

"He is my brother," said Don Pedro.

Then, he added with a tone of which the expression was understood by himself alone—

"My well-beloved brother."

"Your brother," she replied; "I thought, for my part, that he was the brother of Henry of Transtamara."

"Yes, madame; but they are both sons of the king, Don Alphonso, my father."

"And you treat him as a king; I understand his having, in fact, almost a right to such honours, since he is beloved by a queen."

"I understand you not," said Don Pedro, growing pale in his own despite, but without any other sign than this involuntary paleness, indicating that the blow had struck to the heart.

"Ah! Don Pedro, Don Pedro," said Maria Padilla, "you are either very blind, or much of a philosopher."

The king made no reply; he only turned, as on purpose, towards the east.

"Well! what do you look for?" asked the impatient Spaniard; "is it for the arrival of your well-beloved brother?"

"No, madame," replied Don Pedro. "I look to see whether from the royal terrace where we stand we can behold the towers of Medina Sidonia."

"Yes," answered Maria Padilla; "I well know that you are about to make the same reply as always, that the faithless queen is a prisoner; and, how is it that you, who are surnamed the Justiciero, punish one without punishing the other? How is it that the queen remains a prisoner, while her accomplice is loaded with honours?"

"What has my brother, Don Frederick, done to you, madame?" asked Don Pedro.

"If you loved me, you would not ask me what he has done; and you would already have avenged me. What has he done? He has pursued me, not with his hatred, that would be nothing, hatred honours, but with his contempt; and you should punish whoever despises the woman whom you love not, it is true; but whom you have admitted to your bed, and who alone has borne you sons."

The king gave no reply; his was an impenetrable soul, in which it was impossible to read through the layer of bronze which covered it.

"Oh! how fine it is to adorn oneself with the semblance of virtues one does not possess," disdainfully resumed Maria Padilla; how easy is it for artful women to veil their shameful passions under a look of timidity, to clothe their scandalous conduct, under the prejudice which says that the daughters of Gaul are cold and insensible when compared with the women of Spain."

Don Pedro continued silent.

"Pedro, Pedro," recommenced his mistress, irritated by seeing that her sarcasms glanced off the invulnerable sovereign. "Pedro, I think you

* This must be considered to refer only to the purse, as she is found to remark a little further on, that her family was among the most illustrious in Spain.—Translator.

would do better to listen to the voice of your people. Do you hear it exclaiming: 'Ah! Maria Padilla, the courtesan of the king, and disgrace to the kingdom; behold her guilty and criminal that she is, she dares to love her prince, not for his rank, for he is married, but for himself. While other women were conspiring against his honour, she was yielding him her own, counting on his protection and gratitude. When his wives, for the Christian Pedro has as many as a Moorish sultan, while his wives, even though faithless, remain unfruitful, she has borne him two sons, whom she loves; what infamy! Let us curse Maria Padilla, as La Cava* was cursed; these women are always the destruction of the people and of their king.' Such is the voice of Spain. Listen to it then, Don Pedro! But were I queen, they would say, 'Poor Maria Padilla, you were very happy when you were a virgin and played on the banks of the Guadalopa with the virgins, your companions! Poor Maria Padilla, you were very happy, when the king stole your happiness by pretending to love you! Your family was so illustrious that the first nobles of Castile aspired to your hand; but you have committed the fault of preferring a king. Poor young inexperienced girl, ignorant as yet that kings are not men; he deceives you however, you who never deceived him, even in thought, even in a dream! He gives his heart to other mistresses, forgetting your fidelity, your devotion, your fruitfulness.' Were I queen, they would say all this, and I should pass for a saint, yes, for a saint. Is it not the title which is given to a woman I know, who has betrayed her husband with his brother?"

Don Pedro, whose front had become gradually clouded, passed his hand over his forehead, and re-appeared calm and almost smiling.

"La fine, madame," he said, "what is your aim? to be my queen? You know well that is impossible since I am already married, and even twice over. Ask of me things which are possible, and I will grant them."

"I thought I might ask what Juana de Castro asked for and obtained."

"Juana de Castro asked for nothing, madame. It was necessity, that inexorable queen of kings, which asked for her. She had a powerful family, and at the moment that I was making myself external enemies by repudiating Blanche, it was necessary that I should obtain allies within. And now, do you wish me to deliver my brother Frederick to gaolers at the moment when war threatens, when my other brother, Don Henry of Transtamara, is stirring up Arragon against me, has taken Toledo, escalated Toro, which I am forced to re-conquer from my relations with greater difficulty than I should have in regaining Grenada from the Moors? Do you forget that for some short time, I who hold others in prison, have been a prisoner myself, forced to dissemble, to curb the head, to smile on those whom I wished to sting, to creep like a child under the aspiring will of my mother; that it cost me six months of dissimulation ere I could find one day the gates of my own palace open for a minute; that I was compelled to fly to Segovia, to tear piece by piece the inheritance left me by my father from the hands of those who had seized it, to have Garciasso poniarded at Burgos, Albuquerque poisoned at

Toro; to have twenty-two heads struck off at Toledo; and to change my name of Justicer into that of cruel, without knowing which of the two will be assigned me by posterity? And as to the Frenchwoman, as you term her, is it not enough that, for a supposed crime, she should be secluded in Medina Sidonia, almost in solitude, almost in poverty, and wholly despised, because it has pleased you to see her so treated?"

"Ah! it is not because I have been pleased to see her thus treated," cried Maria Padilla, with flushing eyes; "it is because you have been dishonoured by her."

"No, madam," said Don Pedro, "no, I have not been dishonoured, because I am not one of those who make the honour or dishonour of a king repose on anything so fragile as the virtue of a woman. No, I have not been dishonoured by the Queen Blanche; but I had been forced to marry her against my own wish, and I seized the opportunity, which she and my brother had the imprudence to furnish me. I feigned to conceive, regarding her, the most terrible suspicions. I have humiliated and degraded her, though she is the daughter of the first house in Christendom. Therefore, if you love me as much as you say, you should pray to God that no misfortune may befall me, for the Regent, or rather the King of France, is her brother-in-law. He is a great prince, madam, who possesses powerful armies, commanded by the first general of the time, by Messire Bertrand Dugueselin.*

"Ah! king, you are afraid!" said Maria Padilla, preferring the king's anger to that cold impassibility which made Don Pedro, when master of himself, the most dangerous prince on earth.

"I am afraid of you, I admit, madam," said the king; "for you alone have hitherto had the power to make me commit the only faults which I have committed."

"I think that a king who seeks for his counsellors and agents among Moors and Jews, should throw the blame of his faults on others than the woman he loves."

"Ah! you also then have fallen into the vulgar error," said Don Pedro, shrugging his shoulders. "My Moorish counsellors, my Jewish agents! Well, madam, I demand counsel from those who have understanding, resources from those who have money. If you and those who accuse me, would take the trouble to glance at the state of Europe, you would see that it is among the Moors that civilization is to be found—among the Jews wealth. Who have built the mosque of Cordova, the Alhambra of Grenada, all the Alcazars which make the ornament of our towns? even the palace, where we now stand, who have made all that? The Moors. In whose hands do we find trade?—in whose hands industry?† In whose hands do we find the gold of thoughtless nations heaped up?

* I may here observe, that there would be an anachronism in representing Bertrand Dugueselin, as, at this time, holding high command in the armies of France, unless 1361, at the commencement of Chapter II., be a misprint for 1364. In the first year, John, the then King of France, had just returned to his country in virtue of the treaty of Brittany, by which an enormous sum was paid for his personal ransom from the hands of the English, and the province of Aquitaine, formerly held as a fief, vested in full sovereignty in Edward III. and his heirs. In 1361, Charles was not regent, John having returned to his kingdom, but he was again so before 1364, John having returned of his own accord to England, where he died in the same year. Dugueselin could not, during the life-time of the Black Prince or of John, Lord Chandos, be considered the first captain of his time, since he was twice defeated and taken prisoner by them.—Translator.

† Industry and trade are nearly allied, but are not to be confounded. Trade is the transfer of those commodities which industry produces. In the past as in the present, the Jew has always busied himself with the transfer of com-

* La Cava was the mistress of Don Roderick, with whom expired the Visigothic dynasty of Spain. The invasion of the Moors is reported to have arisen from the invitation of Count Julian, her father, in revenge for the lapse of his daughter. But the Saracenic crescent would no doubt have found its way thither, without any such pretext.—Translator.

In the hands of the Jews! What are we to expect from our half barbarous Christians? Fruitless blows with lances, great battles which cause nations to bleed. But who looks on at the insensate pranks of these nations? Who flourish, sing, love, and enjoy life, in the neighbourhood of all these convulsions? The Moors! Who pounce on their corpses to despoil them? The Jews. You must see clearly therefore that Moors and Jews are the fit ministers, the fit agents of a king who wishes to preserve his freedom and independence from the kings, his neighbours! Well, that is what I am trying, what I have been attempting for six years, what has raised against me so much enmity, and has caused so many calumnies to see the light. Those who wished to become my ministers, those who wished to become my agents, have become my implacable enemies, and 'tis no more than natural; I had done nothing for them, I wished nothing from them, and I kept them at a distance. But you, on the contrary, Maria, I took you from where you were placed; I brought you as close to my throne as I could; I have given you as large a share of my heart, as a king can dispose of; in fine, I have loved you, I, who am accused of never having loved anything."

"Ah! had you loved me," replied Maria, with that female pertinacity which never replies to the arguments with which their foolish accusations are refuted, but only to their own thoughts; "had you loved me, I should not be doomed to tears and shame for having been devoted to my king; had you loved me, I should have been avenged."

"Eh! forsooth!" said Don Pedro, "wait and you will be avenged if there be reason why you should. Do you believe that I bear Don Frederick next my heart? Do you believe that I would be otherwise than very happy to have done with the whole bastard race? Well then, if Don Frederick has really outraged you, which I doubt—"

"And is it not outraging me," replied Maria Padilla, pale with rage, "is it not outraging me to counsel you, as he has done, not to keep me as your mistress, and to take back the Queen Blanche as your wife?"

"And you are sure that he gave me this counsel, Maria?"

"Oh, yes, I am sure," said the Spaniard, with a threatening gesture, "sure as that I live at this moment."

"Then, my dear Maria," replied Don Pedro with that phlegm which is so exasperating for people who allow themselves to be carried away by anger, "if Don Frederick advised me not to keep you as a mistress, and to take back the Queen Blanche as my wife, you must be wrong in accusing him of being the lover of this very Queen Blanche: otherwise you, jealous as you are, may understand they would be very happy to enjoy so great a liberty, as that which is left to a wife one despises."

"You are too great an orator for me, Don Pedro," replied Maria, rising up, incapable of longer controlling her fury. "I salute your majesty, and will endeavour to avenge myself alone."

Don Pedro followed her with his eye without a word, saw her depart without recalling her by a single sign, and yet this was the only woman who had ever made him feel any other sentiment than that of the satisfaction of physical passion. But even on that account, he feared his mistress as he modities from cast-off clothes to state securities, but has not concerned himself with their production. The poor Jew in the present day is a hawker, the rich Jew a discounteer; very rarely, indeed, is the first a workman, or the second an employer.—*Translator.*

would have feared an enemy. He stifled, therefore, that weak feeling of pity which he felt stirring at the bottom of his heart, and stretched himself on the cushions whence Maria Padilla had risen, his eye fixed on the road to Portugal; for from the balcony where the king reposed, one might see over plain, wood, or mountain, the different roads, leading to various quarters of the kingdom.

"Horrible condition of kings!" murmured Don Pedro. "I love that woman, and yet neither to herself, nor to others, dare I show that I love her; for were she to perceive that love, she would abuse it; for it is unfit that any should believe they possess enough empire over the king, to snatch from him either reparation for an injury or any advantage. Above all, it is unfit that any one should say: 'The queen has outraged the king; the king knows it and he is not avenged!' Oh!" continued Don Pedro, after an instant's silence, during which his countenance indicated all that was passing in his heart, "it is not the desire to avenge myself which is wanting, but were I to act too violently, my kingdom, perhaps, would be lost by this act of imprudent justice. As to Don Frederick, he depends on me only, and the King of France can have nought to say, either to his life, or his death. Only, will he come? or if he come, will he not have time to warn his accomplice?"

As he spoke these words, the king perceived on the road of the Sierra d'Araisena, what seemed a cloud of dust. This cloud increased. Soon, through this veil, now become more transparent, he perceived the white robes of the Moorish horsemen; then by the height of his stature, by the gilded palanquin near which he rode, the king recognised Mothril.

The troop advanced rapidly.

"Alone!" murmured the king.

When he was able to comprehend with one glance the first and the last of the men composing the troop, "Alone! what then has become of the grand master? Has he, perchance, refused to come to Seville? and must one go to seek him as far as Coimbra?" However, the troop continued to advance.

At the end of an instant, it disappeared under the gates of the town. The king followed it with his eyes, and from time to time saw it re-appear and glisten amid the tortuous streets of the city; at last he saw it enter the Alcazar; by leaning on the balustrade, he could follow it through the courts; it was obvious that in an instant he would be assured.

The Moor had free and absolute right of entry to the king. After an instant's lapse, he appeared, therefore, on the terrace, and found Don Pedro erect, his eyes fastened on the spot, by which he knew he was to arrive. His countenance was gloomy, and he sought not to dissemble his anxiety.

The Moor crossed his hands on his breast, and almost brought his forehead to the ground. But Don Pedro only replied to this salute by an impatient gesture.

"The grand master," he said.

"Sire," replied Mothril, "it was my duty to return with all speed to you. The great interests concerning which I have to speak will procure, no doubt, your highness's attention to the voice of his faithful servant."

Don Pedro, accustomed as he was to read in the depths of the heart, was too much absorbed in the passions which disturbed him at the moment, to see how much cunning precaution was involved in the purposely embarrassed words of the Moor.

"The grand master!" he repeated, stamping with his foot.



"My lord, he will come," replied Mothril.

"Why have you left him? Why, if he be not guilty, does he not come of his own accord? or, if he be, why is he not brought by force?"

"My lord, the grand master is not innocent, and yet be assured he will come; perhaps he would endeavour to fly, but he is watched by my followers; they lead him, rather than escort him hither. If I have taken a start in advance, 'tis that I may speak to the king, not of the things that are done, but of those that remain to do."

"Thus, then, he is coming, you are sure of that?" repeated Don Pedro.

"To-morrow evening he will be at the gates of Seville; I have made good speed, as you see."

"No one is informed of his journey?"

"None."

"You understand the importance of my question and the gravity of your answer?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well then! what further news have you?" asked Don Pedro, with a horrible contraction of the heart, of which his face revealed nothing, for he had had time to compose that to an air of indifference.

"The king knows how jealous I am of his honour," said the Moor.

"Yes, but you know also, Mothril," said Don Pedro, knitting his brow, "that though insinuations on that subject may be tolerated by me from Maria Padilla, from a jealous woman by perhaps too patient a lover, yet that from you to Don Pedro, from the minister to the king, all blame on the irreproachable conduct of Queen Blanche is interdicted; you know it, and if you have forgotten, I repeat it."

"Sire Pedro," said the Moor, "a king so powerful and happy as you are, at once loving and beloved, can find no room in his heart either for envy or jealousy; I can understand that your

happiness, my lord, is great, but that happiness should not render you blind."

"This time you *know* something," said Don Pedro, fixing his searching glance on the Moor.

"My lord," coldly replied this last, "your lordship, without doubt, has often reflected on the snares with which you are surrounded. Your wisdom must have inquired what was to become of the monarchy of Castile, when its king possesses no heir."

"No heirs," repeated Don Pedro.

"At least no lawful heirs," resumed the Moor; so that in case any misfortune befell you, the kingdom would belong to the boldest or most fortunate of the bastards, whether to Henry, to Don Frederick, or to Tello.

"Why all these words, Mothril?" asked Don Pedro. "Would you, perchance, advise me to marry a third time? The results of my two first marriages have not been so happy as to make me follow your advice. I warn you of that Mothril."

These words dragged out from the depths of the king's soul by strong regret, made the Moor's eyes glitter.

It was the revelation of all the torments which Don Pedro underwent in his agitated mind; Mothril knew half of what he wished to know, a word would tell him the rest.

"My lord," he said, "why should not your third wife be a woman whose character you had sounded, and whose fruitfulness should be certain. Marry Donna Maria Padilla, for instance, as you love her so much as not to be able to quit her, and as her family is sufficiently high to enable her to become queen. Thus your sons would become legitimate, and none would have the right to dispute their claim to the throne of Castile.

Mothril had combined all the strength of his understanding that he might measure the bearing of an attack which did not admit of being repeated. Then, with a delight unknown to other men, and known only by those whose all-embracing ambition makes kingdoms the stake of their game, he saw a dark cloud of trouble pass over his sovereign's countenance.

"I have already broken without any result, a marriage which connected me with the King of France," said Don Pedro; "I cannot now break that which connects me with the house of Castro."

"Tis well," muttered Mothril to himself; "no more real love in his heart, no longer any influence to be dreaded; there is a place to be taken, if not on the King of Castile's throne, at least in his bed."

"Let us bring this matter to an end," said Don Pedro. "You had, you said, something important to communicate."

"Oh! what I had to say was merely a piece of news which releases you from all respect due to France."

"This news, then—speak quickly."

"My lord," said Mothril, "permit me to descend, that I may give my orders to the escort of the litter which waits below. I am anxious on the subject, as I have left in it alone, a person whom I hold very dear."

Don Pedro looked at him with surprise.

"Go," said he, "and return quickly."

The Moor descended, and made the litter advance as far as the first court.

Don Pedro from the height of the terrace followed the proceedings of his minister. Mothril returned a few moments afterwards.

"My lord," he said, "will your highness again

grant me, as hitherto, an apartment in the Alcazar?"

"Yes, certainly"

"Allow me then to conduct thither the person who is in the litter."

"A woman?" asked Don Pedro.

"Yes, my lord."

"A slave whom you love?"

"Sire, my daughter."

"I did not know that you had a daughter, Mothril."

Mothril made no reply. Doubt and curiosity took possession at once of the king's soul. That was what the Moor desired.

"Now," said Don Pedro, whom the importance of the situation recalled to the matters he wished to know, "tell me what you know concerning Queen Blanche."

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE MOOR RELATED WHAT HAD PASSED TO THE KING, DON PEDRO.

THE Moor approached the king, and assuming an expression of deep compassion; that is, of the sentiment which, from an inferior, was most likely to wound, he said.

"Sire, before commencing this recital, I need to feel assured that your highness remembers, in every particular, the orders you have given me."

"Continue," said Don Pedro, "I never forget aught of what I have once spoken."

"The king had ordered me to repair to Coimbra. I repaired thither, to say to the grand master that his highness expected him, I said so; to hasten his departure, I took but an hour's rest, and the very day of our arrival we set out on our journey."

"Good, good," said Don Pedro, "I know Mothril, that you are a faithful servant."

"Your highness added: 'you will be on your guard, lest during your journey the grand master should give any one notice of his departure.' Well, the very day after our departure, the grand master, * * * But truly, notwithstanding your highness's orders, I know not whether I should tell you what had passed."

"Continue."

"On the day after his departure, the grand master wrote a letter."

"To whom?"

"To the very person whom your highness feared lest he should write to."

"To the Queen Blanche?" cried Pedro, growing pale. "To the Queen Blanche, Sire Moor?" said Don Pedro; "think on the gravity of such an accusation."

"I think only how I may serve my king."

"You may still say that you have been mistaken."

Mothril shook his head.

"I have not been mistaken," he replied.

"Have a care! That letter I must have," exclaimed Don Pedro, in a threatening voice.

"I have it here!" wildly replied the Moor.

Don Pedro who had made a step in advance, trembled and fell back.

"Oh!" he said, "you have it?"

"Yes."

"The letter written by Don Frederick?"

"Yes."

"To Blanche of Bourbon?"

"Yes."

"And this letter?"

"I will give it to your highness, when you are less exasperated than you are at this moment."

"I!" said Don Pedro, with a nervous smile, "I exasperated? I have never been calmer."

"No, your highness, you are not calm, for your eye is indignant, your lips grow pale, your hand trembles and dallies with your dagger. Why conceal it, my lord? 'Tis very natural, and revenge in such a case is lawful; wherefore conjecturing that your highness's vengeance will be terrible, I endeavour before hand to soften it."

"Give me the letter, Mothril!" exclaimed the king.

"But, my lord——"

"Give me the letter without delay, on the very instant—I will it!"

The Moor slowly drew from beneath his crimson robe the pouch belt of the unfortunate Fernando.

"My first duty," he said, "is to obey my master, whatever may be the consequence."

The king examined the pouch belt, drew from it the bag embroidered in pearls, opened it and eagerly seized the letter which it contained. The seal of the letter had obviously been raised; Don Pedro's features underwent a new contraction when he saw this; but without making any observation, he read:—

"Madam and queen, the king has commanded my presence at Seville. I have promised to acquaint you with the leading occurrences in my life; this appears to me decisive.

"Whatever may happen, illustrious lady, and cherished sister, I should little fear the vengeance of Donna Padilla, who doubtless has caused me to be sent for, did I know that your dear person was in safety from her aim. I know not what awaits me; perhaps a prison, perhaps death. As a prisoner, I can no longer defend you, and if I must die, I avail myself of a moment in which my arm is free, to tell you that my arm would be at your service, were it not enchained, that my heart is yours even unto death."

"Fernando bears you this advice, this adieu, perhaps, until we meet again, my beloved queen and friend, in this world perhaps, certainly in Heaven.

"DON FREDERICK."

"This Fernando, who is he? where is he?" asked Don Pedro, so pale that he was frightful to behold.

"My lord," replied Mothril, in a tone of perfect ease, "this Fernando was the grand master's page. He left in our company; on the evening of the day following our departure, he received this message. The same night, in crossing the Zezere, it so chanced that he was drowned, and that I found this writing on his corpse."

Don Pedro needed no explanation to understand Mothril.

"Ah," he said, "it was you who found the corpse?"

"Yes."

"Before every one else?"

"Yes."

"Thus the contents of this letter are unknown to all?"

"My lord" said Mothril, "pardon my audacity; the interest of my sovereign prevailed with one over the discretion which he enjoined; I opened the pouch belt and have read the letter."

"But you alone? Then it is as if no one had read it."

"Doubtless, my lord, since this letter is in my hands."

"But before it was so?"

"Ah! sire; before, I can answer for nothing, the less so since the page was not alone in the vicinity of his master: there was there one of the accursed, a giaour, a dog, a Christian—pardon, sire."

"And who was this Christian?"

"A knight of France whom the grand master called his brother."

"Ah!" said Don Pedro, with a smile, "I should have thought he would have given some other name to his friend."

"Well! he has no secrets from that Christian, and it would not be surprising if he were a sharer in the confidence reposed in the page, and in that case, the crime would be public."

"The grand master is coming?" asked Don Pedro.

"He follows me, sire."

Don Pedro walked up and down some time, with his brows knit, his arms crossed, and his head leaning on his breast; it was easy to see that a terrible storm was raging within his heart.

"It is by him, then, that we must begin," said he at last, in a gloomy voice, "it is, moreover, the only excuse of which I can avail myself with respect to France. When the king, Charles V., sees that I have not spared my brother, he will no longer doubt the crime, and will forgive me for not sparing his sister-in-law."

"But do you not fear me?" said Mothril, "that your vengeance may be misunderstood, and that it may be supposed that you have struck in the grand master, not the lover of Queen Blanche, but the brother of Henry de Transtamara, your competitor to the throne."

"I will publish the letter," said the king, "blood shall efface the stain; go, you have served me faithfully."

"What are now the king's orders?"

"That the grand master's apartment be prepared."

Mothril went out; Don Pedro remained alone, and his thoughts became still darker; he saw derision sporting with his name, the proud and jealous man displaced the impassible monarch; he could fancy he already heard the rumour of the loves of Blanche and the grand master flying amidst the people with all those exaggerations which it adds to royal faults. Then, as he fixed his eyes on the apartments of Donna Padilla, he thought he could see her standing behind the curtains of her window, and could observe on her countenance the smile of satisfied pride.

"'Tis not she who makes me do what I am about to accomplish," he said, "and yet people will say that she was the cause and she will believe it."

He turned away his head with impatience, and his eyes wandered vaguely around him.

At that moment, on a terrace below that of the royal apartment, passed two Moorish slaves, bearing censers, whence exhaled a bluish and perfumed vapour. The mountain breeze wafted this delicious perfume to where the king stood.

Following the slaves, came a woman wearing a veil, of a figure lofty yet supple, of slender waist, her head inclined downwards. She was enveloped in one of those black veils which only leaves an opening for the flash of the eye. Mothril was following her with a respectful demeanour, and when they were at the door of the room, where the strange female was to enter, the Moor almost prostrated himself at the young girl's feet.

Those perfumes, that voluptuous look, that respect of the Moor were in such strong con-

trast with the passions which choked Don Pedro's heart, that he felt for a moment refreshed and regenerated, as if youth and pleasure had been called into life by that apparition.

He therefore waited for the evening with impatience.

And when the evening was come, he descended from his apartment, and through gardens the right of entry to which was reserved to himself, made his way, trusting to the night, to a spot facing the kiosque, occupied by Mothril; then carefully raising up the thick festoons and the branches of an immense rose laurel, which concealed, more effectually than curtains, the interior of the apartment from indiscreet glances, he was enabled to descry, on a large silken cushion brodered with silver, Aïssa, scarcely veiled by a long transparent robe, her feet naked and adorned with anklets and rings in the Oriental fashion, her forehead serene, her eyes lost in a vague reverie, her lips smiling, and under their parted vermillion, displaying teeth fine, white, and equal, as pearls.

Mothril had reckoned on the king's curiosity; since the night had fallen he had looked and listened, he had heard the noise made by raising the branches; he could distinguish, in the calmness and cool of the night, the respiration of the king, but he showed no sign of being aware that his sovereign was there. Only as the careless young girl let fall from her hand her coral rosary, he hastened to pick it up, and restored it, almost kneeling before her.

Aïssa smiled.

"Why so many honours since the last two or three days?" she said. "A father only owes tenderness to his child, and 'tis the child who owes respect to the father."

"What Mothril does, it is right that he should do," answered the Moor.

"Why then, my father, bestow on me more attention than on yourself?"

"Because more attention is due to you than to me," he replied; "for the day may perhaps come, when all will be revealed to you; and when that day arrives, perhaps, Donna Aïssa, you will no longer deign to call me your father."

These mysterious words struck the young girl and the king simultaneously with an impression impossible to define; but, however pressing Aïssa was in her inquiries, Mothril would say nothing further, and withdrew.

As he went out Aïssa's women entered; they came with large fans of ostrich feathers to refresh the air round their mistress's sofa, while a sweet music which was heard without instrument or performer being visible, vibrated through the air like a melodious perfume. Aïssa shut her large eyes which had lighted up with secret flames.

"What does she dream of?" said the king, seeing, as it were, the shadow of a dream float over her face.

She was dreaming of the handsome French knight.

The women drew near to lower the blinds.

"'Tis strange," said the king, forced to leave his dangerous contemplation, "I could say that she pronounced a name."

The king was not mistaken; she had pronounced the name of Agénor.

But although the blinds had been closed, Don Pedro was not in a state of mind which allowed of his returning to his apartments.

The heart of that prince was at that moment full of the most contradictory feelings.

These feelings produced a conflict which

banished all hope of repose and sleep; seeking, therefore, freshness from the air of the night and calmness from its silence, the king remained wandering in the gardens, always returning, as if by irresistible attraction, to the kiosque where the beautiful Moresca was wrapt in the most profound slumber; sometimes also he passed before the windows of Donna Padilla, and fixed his eye on their darkened glasses; then believing that the haughty Spaniard was asleep, he resumed his walk, which always by a greater or lesser circuit brought him back to the kiosque.

The king was mistaken; Maria Padilla was not asleep; the lights were extinguished; but as full of fire as that of Don Pedro, her heart burnt and bounded in her bosom, for standing motionless behind her window, wrapped in a dark coloured dress, she looked at the king without losing one of his motions, and, we may almost say, without letting one of his thoughts escape her.

There were besides Maria Padilla's eyes, two others, which also read in Don Pedro's heart; these were the eyes of the Moor, who had posted himself as a sentinel to estimate the results of his intrigue. When the king approached Aïssa's windows he trembled with joy. When Don Pedro raised his eyes to the apartment of Maria Padilla, and appeared to hesitate whether he would not repair to his mistress, the Moor's mouth muttered, in an under tone, threats which his hand, instinctively clutching his poinard, seemed ready to execute. It was under the influence of these piercing and venomous looks from two different quarters that Don Pedro, while he thought himself solitary and forgotten, passed all the night; at last, thoroughly wearied out, about an hour before daylight he stretched himself on a bench and slept with that feverish and agitated sleep which is only an addition to other sufferings.

"You are not yet, as I would wish you," said Mothril, as he saw the king yield to the oppression of weariness; "I must manage to rid you of that Donna Padilla whom you love no longer, as you say, and yet whom you cannot resolve to quit."

And he allowed the curtain, which he had raised to look into the garden, to fall.

"It must be so," said Maria Padilla to herself, "there is one last effort to be made, one prompt and decisive effort, before this woman, for doubtless it was a woman that he was looking at through the blinds, has had time to gain influence over his heart."

And she gave directions to her servants, who, when morning began, made a great racket in the palace.

When the king awoke and went up to his apartment, he heard in the courts the trampling of mules and horses, and in the passages the hurried steps of women and pages.

He was about to inquire the cause of all this movement, when his door opened, and Maria Padilla appeared on the threshold.

"For whom, madam, are these horses in readiness, and to what purpose are these servants so busy?" asked Don Pedro.

"They wait my departure, sire; a departure which I have hastened as much as possible, to spare your highness the presence of a woman who can no longer do anything for your happiness. Besides, my enemy arrives to-day, and, as doubtless in the outburst of fraternal love, your intention will be to sacrifice me to him, I yield the place to him, for I owe myself to my children, who since their father forgets them, stand doubly in need of their mother."

Maria Padilla passed for being the most beautiful woman in Spain; such was her influence over Don Pedro, that contemporary chroniclers, convinced that beauty, however perfect, could not reach such power, attributed that influence to magic, instead of seeking its causes in the natural charms of the magician.

Such as she was, in the beauty of her twenty-fifth year, in the wealth of her title of mother, with her long black hair falling down on the plain woollen dress which, as was the fashion in the fourteenth century, clung closely to her arms, her shoulders, and her bosom, she was, to Don Pedro, the sum not of all that he had dreamed, but of all that he had really felt of love and gentle thoughts; she was the fairy of the house, the flower of the soul, the jewel-casket of happy memories. The king looked on her with melancholy.

"It has surprised me, Maria," he said, "that you have not already left me; it is true that you have well chosen your time—that when my brother Henry is in revolt, when my brother Frederick betrays me, when the King of France is doubtless about to make war against me. It is true that women love not misfortune."

"Are you unhappy?" exclaimed Donna Padilla, making two steps in advance and extending her hands to Don Pedro, "in that case I remain, that is enough for me; hitherto I should have asked, 'Pedro, if I remain, will you be happy?'"

On his part, the king was leaning forward, so that one of Maria's beautiful hands fell within his own. He was in one of those moods when the heart, profoundly wounded, feels the need of healing itself by a little love.

He carried the hand to his lips.

"You are wrong, Maria," he said, "I love you, but if you wished to find a love that should match with your own, you should have sought it elsewhere than in a king."

"You do not then wish me to leave?" said Maria Padilla, with that adorable smile which made Don Pedro forget the rest of the universe.

"No," said the king, "if only you consent to share my future fortunes, as you have shared those which are past."

Then, from the very spot where she stood, through the open window, and with one of those queenly gestures which would have made one suppose that Maria was born on a throne, the beautiful figure made a sign to all her train, ready to depart, to return to their apartments.

At that moment entered Mothril. This too prolonged conference of Don Pedro with his mistress had made him anxious.

"What now?" asked Don Pedro with impatience.

"I have to inform you, sire," replied the Moor, "that your brother Don Frederick is now arriving, and that his escort is visible on the road of Portugal."

At this news, such an expression of hatred darted in flashes from the king's eyes, that Maria Padilla readily saw that she had nothing to fear from that quarter, and after having leaned her forehead towards Don Pedro, who touched it with his pale lips, she returned with a smile to her apartments.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THE GRAND MASTER ENTERED THE ALCAZAR OF SEVILLE, WHERE THE KING, DON PEDRO, WAS WAITING FOR HIM.

IN fact, as Mothril had said, the grand master was approaching Seville; he reached the gates about noon, in the greatest heat of the day.

The horsemen, Moors, and Christians who formed his escort, were covered with dust, and the flanks of their mules and horses were bathed in sweat. The grand master cast a glance on the town walls, which he believed he should see covered with soldiers and people as on feast days, but he saw only the sentinels on their usual rounds.

"Must one acquaint the king?" asked one of Don Frederick's officers, preparing to take the lead if the prince ordered him.

"Do not trouble yourself," said Don Frederick with a melancholy smile, "the Moor has gone on before us, and the king is already apprised of my arrival. Besides," he added with a tone of bitterness, "are you not aware that tourneys and entertainments have been awaiting my arrival at Seville?"

The Spaniards looked around them with surprise, for nothing indicated the tournaments which had been promised, or the entertainments which had been commanded. On the contrary, all was sad and gloomy; they questioned the Moors, but the Moors made no reply.

They entered the town; doors and windows were shut as is usual in Spain, during the great heat of the day; neither people nor preparations were visible in the streets, and no other noise was heard than that of the doors opened to give passage to some one late in taking his nap, and anxious to know before making his siesta what troops of horsemen it was that entered the town at an hour, when in Spain, even the Moors themselves, those children of the sun, seek the shade of the woods, or the coolness of the river.

The Christian cavaliers rode first; the Moors, more than double their number, for many other troops had successively joined the first, formed the rear guard. Don Frederick observed all these manœuvres; the aspect of the town, which he had expected to see full of life and joy, and which, on the contrary, he found sad and silent as a tomb, had already awoken terrible suspicions in his breast. An officer approached him, and speaking in his ear:—

"My lord," said he, "have you remarked that the gate by which we entered has been shut behind us?"

The grand master made no reply; all continued their way, and soon the Alcazar appeared in view.

Mothril was waiting at the door with some of Don Pedro's officers. Their countenances wore a smile of welcome.

The troop, so impatiently expected, immediately entered the courts of the Alcazar, of which the gates, like those of the town, were forthwith shut upon them.

Mothril had followed the prince with a demeanour of the most profound respect.

At the moment of his alighting, the Moor approached and said:

"You know, my lord, that it is not customary to enter a palace with arms. Will you permit me to bear your sword to your apartment?"

Don Frederick's anger, long suppressed, seemed to wait but this opportunity to burst forth.

"Slave," he said, "are you so brutified by servility, that you do not know how to recognise

your princes, or obey your masters? Since when is it that the grand master of St. James of Calatrava, who has the right to enter helmeted and spurred into the church, and to pray to God in complete armour, is prohibited from entering the palace with a weapon, and speaking with a sheathed sword to his brother?"

Mothril respectfully listened, and humbly bowed his head.

"Your lordship has spoken the truth," he replied; "and your very humble servant had forgotten, not that you were a prince, but that you were a grand master of the order of Calatrava. All these privileges are Christian customs, and it is not astonishing that a poor misbeliever like myself, should be ignorant of, or forget them."

At that moment another officer approached Don Frederick.

"Is it true," he said, "my lord, that you have ordered us to leave you?"

"Who has said that?" asked the grand master.

"One of the guards at the gate."

"And you answered him?"

"That we had no orders to receive but from our lord, Don Frederick."

The prince hesitated an instant; he felt his own youth and vigour, he knew his own bravery, and he was well enough supported to make a long defence.

"My lord," continued the officer, seeing that his master deliberated, "say a word, give a sign, and we will deliver you from this snare into which you have fallen; there are here thirty of us, bearing lance, sword, and dagger."

Don Frederick looked at Mothril, he caught a smile on his lips, and followed the direction of his look. On the terraces surrounding the courts were to be seen archers and crossbowmen, their bows and crossbows in hand.

"I should but cause these brave fellows to be massacred," said Don Frederick to himself; "no, since I alone am the object of enmity, alone will I enter."

The grand master turned to his companions with an air of calmness and confidence.

"Retire, my friends," he said, "I am in the palace of my brother and my king; treachery inhabits not such abodes, and if I am deceived, remember that I was forewarned of betrayal, and that I refused to believe it."

The soldiers of Don Frederick saluted, and went out one by one. Don Frederick then found himself alone, amid the Moors and the king, Don Pedro's, guards.

"And now," he said, turning towards Mothril, "I wish to see my brother."

"My lord, your desire will be fulfilled," replied the Moor, "for the king impatiently expects you."

He drew aside that the prince might mount the staircase of the Alcazar.

"Where is my brother?" asked the grand master.

"In the apartment of the terrace."

It was an apartment adjoining that usually inhabited by Don Frederick.

As he passed before the door of his own, the grand master stopped for an instant.

"Can I not," he said, "enter my rooms and rest for an instant before appearing in my brother's presence?"

"My lord," replied Mothril, "when your highness has seen the king, you will then be able to rest at your ease, and as long as you think fit."

A movement was perceptible among the Moors who followed the prince. Frederick turned round.

"The dog," murmured the Moors.

In fact, the faithful Alan, instead of following the horse to the stable, had followed his master, as if he guessed the danger which threatened him.

"The dog is mine," said Don Frederick.

The Moors drew aside, less from respect than from fear, and the dog came gladly to lean its paws against its master's breast.

"Yes," he said, "I understand you, and you are right. Fernando is dead, Agénor is far from here, and you are the sole friend I have remaining."

"My lord," said Mothril, with his ironical smile, "is it also one of the privileges of the grand master of St. James, to enter the king's apartments followed by his dog?"

A dark cloud passed over Don Frederick's forehead. The Moor was near him. Don Frederick had his hand on his dagger; one prompt decision, one rapid movement, and he would be avenged on the derisive and insolent slave.

"No," he said to himself, "the king's majesty is in all that surrounds him; let us not infringe the majesty of the king."

He coldly opened the door of his apartment and signed to his dog to enter there.

The dog obeyed.

"Wait for me, Alan," he said.

The dog lay down on a lion's skin. The grand master shut the door. At that moment a voice was heard to cry:—

"My brother, where then is my brother?"

Don Frederick recognised the king's voice, and advanced to that quarter of the apartment whence the voice was heard.

Don Pedro, who had just left his bath, still pale from the effects of a night passed without sleep, and agitated with silent rage, fixed a severe look on the young man who remained kneeling before him.

"Behold me, my king and brother," he said, "you have summoned me, and here I am. I have come in all haste to see you, and to wish you all manner of prosperity."

"How is that possible, grand master?" replied Don Pedro, "and have I not cause to wonder that your words and your actions are so little in agreement. You wish me all manner of prosperity you say, and yet you conspire against me, with my enemies."

"Sire, I do not understand you," said Don Frederick, rising up, for from the moment that he was accused, he would no longer remain kneeling. "Is it indeed to me that these words are addressed?"

"Yes, to yourself, Don Frederick, grand master of St. James."

"Then, sire, you term me traitor."

"Yes! for a traitor you are," replied Don Pedro.

The young man grew pale, but remained self-possessed.

"Why that term, my king?" he said, with an accent of infinite sweetness. "I have never offended you, at least not voluntarily so. On the contrary, in many encounters, and especially in the war against the Moors, who are now your friends, I have wielded a sword of great weight for my then youthful arm."

"Yes," exclaimed Don Pedro, "the Moors are my friends! and it has been very needful to me, that I should choose my friends among the Moors, when in my own family I have only found enemies."

Don Frederick rose up more proud and more

intrepid, in proportion as the king's reproaches became more unjust and more outrageous.

"If you speak of my brother Henry," he said, "I have no answer to make, and that concerns not me. My brother Henry has rebelled against you; my brother Henry is wrong, for you are our lawful lord both by age and birth; but my brother Henry wishes to be King of Castile, and it is said that ambition loses sight of every restraint. I am not ambitious, and have no pretensions. I am grand master of St. James; if you know any more worthy of the office than myself, I am ready to resign it into his hands."

Don Pedro made no reply.

"I have conquered Coimbra from the Moors, and have kept in it, as in my own property. No one possesses rights over my town. Do you wish for Coimbra, my brother? It is a good port."

Don Pedro made no reply.

"I command a small army," resumed Don Frederick, "but I raised it subject to your good pleasure. Do you wish for my soldiers, to fight against your enemies?"

Don Pedro remained silent.

"I have no other possessions than those of my mother, Donna Eleanora de Guzman, and the treasures which I have conquered from the Moors. Do you wish for my money, brother?"

"'Tis neither your office, your town, your soldiers, nor your treasures that I want," said Don Pedro, unable any longer to contain himself at the sight of the young man's calmness, "'tis your head."

"My life is yours as much as the rest, my king; I will defend it no more than I would have defended the rest. Only, why take my head, when my heart is innocent?"

"Innocent," replied Don Pedro. "Do you know a Frenchwoman called Blanche of Bourbon?"

"I know a Frenchwoman called Blanche of Bourbon, and respect her as my queen and my sister."

"Well! that is what I have to say," resumed Don Pedro; "'tis that you hold as a queen and as your sister, the enemy of your brother and your king."

"Sire," said the grand master, "if you call enemy any one whom you have injured, and who preserves at heart the memory of that injury, the person of whom you speak is perhaps your enemy. But on my soul, it would be as meet to call your enemy the antelope whom you have struck with an arrow, and who flies away bleeding."

"I call whoever raises my towns to revolt my enemy, and that woman raised Toledo. I call enemy whoever arms my brothers against me, and that woman has armed against me my brother, not my brother Henry, the man of ambition as you just now termed him, but my brother Don Frederick, the hypocritical and the incestuous."

"My brother, I swear —"

"Swear not, you would perjure yourself."

"My brother —"

"Do you know that?" said Don Pedro, drawing the grand master's letter from Fernando's pouch belt.

At that sight, which proved to him that Fernando had been assassinated, at that proof of his affection fallen into the hands of the king, Don Frederick felt that his strength was failing him. He bent his knee before Don Pedro, and remained an instant with his head bowed under the weight of impending misfortune. A murmur of astonishment ran through the group of courtiers, stationed at the extremity of the gallery. Frederick, on his

knees before his brother, was evidently supplicating the king; but if he begged for mercy, he must be guilty; they would not think that he was begging for another.

"Sire," said Don Frederick, "I take God to witness that I am innocent of that with which you reproach me."

"It is then to God that you will go and say it," resumed the king; "for my part, I do not believe it."

"My death might wash away a stain," said the grand master; "but what will it be when I am free from crime."

"Free from crime!" cried the king, Don Pedro; "What call you that?"

And carried away by anger, the king slapped his brother's face with the letter he had written to Blanche of Bourbon.

"'Tis well," said Frederick, making a step backwards; "kill me, but do not outrage me! I know for long that men may become cowards by dint of living amid courtiers and slaves! King, you are a coward, for you have insulted a prisoner!"

"My guards!" exclaimed Don Pedro; "this way; take him away and kill him."

"A moment's pause," said Don Frederick, extending with dignity his hand toward his brother, "furious as you are, you will hesitate at what I am about to say. You have suspected an innocent woman, and by suspecting her, have outraged the King of France; but you must not offend God at pleasure. Now I wish to pray to God before you assassinate me; I wish an hour to address my Supreme Master. I am no Moor."

Don Pedro was almost mad with rage. But he restrained himself, for others observed him.

"'Tis well, you shall have an hour," he said; "go."

All who were witnesses of this scene, were cold with fear. The eyes of the king flamed, but from Don Frederick's also, lightning darted.

"Be ready in an hour!" cried Don Pedro to him, at the moment he left the room.

"Be re-assured, I shall always die too soon for you, for I shall die innocent."

He remained an hour alone by himself without any one approaching him, in communion with his Maker; then as that hour had expired, and as the executioners had not appeared he went into the gallery and cried:—

"You make me wait. My Lord Don Pedro, the hour is passed."

The executioners entered.

"By what death must I die?" asked the prince. One of the executioners drew his sword.

Frederick examined this sword by passing his finger over its edge.

"Take mine," said he, drawing his sword from the sheath, "it cuts better."

The soldier took the sword.

"When you are ready, grand master," said he.

Frederick made a sign to the soldier to wait an instant; then drawing near a table, he wrote some lines on a parchment, rolled it up, and placed it between his teeth.

"What is that parchment," asked the soldier.

"It is a talisman which renders me invulnerable," said Don Frederick; "strike now, I brave you."

And the young prince, baring his neck, and raising his long hair to the top of his head, knelt down with his hands clasped and a smile on his lips.

"Do you believe in the power of this talisman?"

asked a soldier, in a whisper, from the one about to strike.

"We shall soon see," answered he.

"Strike!" said Frederick.

The sword flashed in the executioner's hands; lightning darted from the blade, and the grand master's head, struck off at a blow, rolled on the floor.

At that moment, a frightful howling reverberated to the palace roofs. The king, who was listening at his door, fled with horror. The executioners rushed out of the room. Nothing remained on the spot but blood, a head lopped from the body, and a dog which, bursting through a door, came to lie down by these sad human wrecks.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON RECEIVED THE LETTER WHICH HE HAD COME IN QUEST OF.

THE first shades of night descended grey and lugubrious on the desolate palace. Don Pedro was seated, gloomy and anxious, in the lower apartments, where he had taken refuge, not daring to remain in the apartment adjoining that where lay the corpse of his brother. Near him was Maria Padilla weeping.

"Why do you weep, madam?" said the king suddenly, and with bitterness. "Have you not now what you have so much wished for. You asked me for the life of your enemy; you should be satisfied, your enemy is no more."

"Sir," said Maria, "perhaps in a moment of feminine pride, of insane anger, I desired that death. May God pardon me if that desire ever dwelt in my heart! but I may say that I never asked it."

"Ah! such are women!" exclaimed Don Pedro; "ardent in their desires, timid in their resolutions; they are always wishing, but they never dare to perform; then if one is mad enough to execute their wishes, they deny ever having formed them."

"Sire, in Heaven's name," said Maria, "never say that it is to me that you sacrificed the grand master; it would be my torment and remorse both in this life and that which is to come. But say what is the truth; say that you sacrificed him to your honour. I will not, do you understand, I will not that you leave me without acknowledging that it was not I who urged you to this murder."

"I will say anything you wish, Maria," coldly replied the king, as he rose and went to meet Mothrill, who had just entered with the rights of a minister and the assurance of a favourite.

At first, Maria turned away her eyes to avoid seeing that man, towards whom the death of the grand master, though it had served her interests, had redoubled her hatred; she withdrew to the embrasure of a window, and there, while the king conversed with the Moor, she looked at a knight in complete armour, who availing himself of the disorder which the execution of Don Frederick had spread throughout the palace, was entering the court without guards or sentinels asking whither he was going.

This knight was Agénor, who was obeying the appeal made to him by the grand master, and who, seeking out the purple curtains which this latter had designated as those of this apartment, disappeared at the turning of the wall.

Maria Padilla followed the knight mechanically with her eyes, without knowing who he

was, until he had disappeared. Then returning from the exterior to the interior, she again directed her glances on the king and on Mothrill.

The king was speaking with animation. By the energy of his gestures it might be perceived that he was giving terrible orders. A spark struck on the mind of Donna Maria; with that rapid intuition which is so frequent with women, she guessed what was the matter in hand.

She sprang towards Don Pedro at the moment when he was making a sign to Mothrill to withdraw.

"Sire," said she, "you will not give two such orders in one day?"

"You have heard me, then," cried the king, growing pale.

"No; but I have guessed. Oh! sire, sire," continued Maria, falling on her knees before the king, "I have often complained of her, often excited you against her, but do not kill her, sire, do not kill her; for after you had killed her, you would say to me, as you have just said in regard to Don Frederick, that it was in answer to my entreaties that you had put her to death."

"Maria," said the king, with a gloomy look, "arise, beseech me no longer, it is useless; all was decided before hand. The matter ought not to have begun if it is not now to be concluded; the death of one draws after it the death of the other. If I struck only at Don Frederick, it would be thought, not that Don Frederick had expiated a crime, but that he had been sacrificed to some private resentment."

Donna Maria looked at the king with horror; as some traveller might tremblingly recoil from the verge of an abyss.

"Ah! all this will fall on me," she said; "on me and my children; it will be said that it was I who drove you to this double murder, and yet you see it, my God," she added, dragging herself to his feet, "I pray, I beseech him not to haunt me with this woman's spectre."

"No; for I shall proclaim all, my shame and their crime; no, for I shall show Don Frederick's letter to his sister-in-law."

"But," said Donna Maria, "you will never find a Spaniard who will raise a hand against the queen."

"I have, therefore, chosen a Moor," impassibly replied Don Pedro. "What would be the use of the Moors if they were not ready to do what a Spaniard would refuse?"

"Oh! I wished to leave this morning," exclaimed Donna Padilla; "why did I remain? But there is still time this evening; allow me to quit this palace; my house is open to you at all hours of the day and night, you will come and see me at my house."

"Do what you please, madam," said Don Pedro, to whom, by a strange turn of thought, the image of the beautiful Moresca of the kiosk, with her voluptuous repose, and her female attendants, with their large fans, watching over her, had just presented itself. "Do whatever you will. I am tired of always hearing that you are going, without ever seeing you go."

"God is my witness," said Maria Padilla, "that I depart from here only because not having demanded that Don Frederick should die, I uselessly ask that Queen Blanche may live."

And before Don Pedro could oppose the proceeding, she rapidly opened the door and prepared to depart; but at that moment a great noise was heard in the palace; people were seen to fly in senseless terror; cries were heard of which the



cause could not be divined; the spirit of disorder seemed to float o'er the palace with extended wings.

"Listen!" said Maria, "listen!"

"What is going on?" exclaimed Don Pedro, approaching his mistress; "and what is the meaning of all this? Answer, Mothril," he continued, addressing the Moor, who standing on the other side of the vestibule, pale and his eyes fixed on an object which Don Pedro could not see, remained motionless, with one hand on his dagger, and the other wiping away the sweat which ran down his forehead.

"Frightful! frightful!" repeated every voice.

Don Pedro impatiently stepped forward, and when it was that a horrible sight struck his eyes. On the summit of the staircase with its broad flights, appeared Don Frederick's dog, bristling like a lion, bloody and terrible; he held in his jaws his master's head, drawing it softly along the marble by its long hair. All the servants and

guards of the palace were flying before him, uttering the cries which Don Pedro had heard. Brave, rash, and unfeeling as he was, Don Pedro strove to fly, but his feet, like those of the Moor, seemed nailed to the floor. The dog continued to descend, leaving a broad crimson track behind him. When he came between Don Pedro and Mothril, as if he recognised in them the assassins of his master, he laid down the head and gave vent to so lamentable a howl, that he made the favourite faint and the king shudder as if the angel of death had touched him with its wings; then he took up again his precious burden, and disappeared in the court.

There was another who had heard the dog's howls, and had shuddered at the sound; this was the knight in complete armour whom Maria had seen entering the Alcazar, and who, at least as superstitious as a Moor, made the sign of the cross on hearing, praying God to preserve him from all evil meetings.

Then that cloud of frightened servants flying,

pushing, upsetting each other, struck him with a stupor resembling fear. The worthy knight leant against a plantain tree, and with his hand on his dagger, beheld that rapid procession of pale shades defile before him; at last he beheld the dog, and the dog perceived him.

The dog came straight to him, led by that subtle instinct which enabled it to recognise in the knight the friend of his late master.

Agénor was struck with horror. That bloody head—that dog resembling a wolf bearing off its prey—that crowd of servants flying with pale visages and stifled cries—all appeared to him like one of those frightful dreams which occur to vile persons devoured by fever.

The dog continued to approach with a sorrowful delight, and laid down at Agénor's feet, the head, soiled with dust, he then uttered the most funereal and piercing howl that he had yet given vent to. Agénor, motionless from fear, for an instant, believed that his heart would fail him; at last, guessing a part of what had passed, he stooped down, put aside with his hands the hair, and recognised although drowned in the shades of death, the calm and mild eyes of his friend. His mouth was as serene as when he lived, and it might be said that the smile which was customary with him, still appeared on his velvet lips. Agénor fell on his knees, and big tears silently rolled down his cheeks. He wished to take the head, to perform for it the last rites, and it was only then he perceived that the teeth of the unfortunate grand master held fast a little roll of parchment; he unclosed them with his dagger, unrolled the parchment, and eagerly read what follows:—

"My friend, our fatal presentiments did not deceive us; my brother puts me to death. Forewarn the Queen Blanche; she also is threatened. You have my secret; preserve me in your memory."

"Yes, my lord," said the knight; "yes, I will execute devoutly your last will! But how am I to escape from here? I no longer know how I came in. My head is going; my memory fails me, and my hand trembles so, that I shall let fall my dagger which I cannot return to its sheath."

In fact, the knight rose to his feet, pale, trembling, almost mad, going straight on, without perceiving anything, stumbling against the marble columns, extending his hands before him like a drunken man, fearing to strike his head against some object. At last, he found himself in a magnificent garden, planted with orange and pomegranate trees, and with rose laurels: silvery jets of water sparkled in vases of porphyry. He ran to one of these basins, drank with avidity, refreshed his forehead by dipping it in the cold water, and sought to discover where he was; then a weak light which he could perceive athwart the trees, drew his attention and guided him. He ran towards it: a form in white leaning against the trefoil mouldings of a balcony, recognised him, uttered a sigh, and murmured his name. Agénor raised his head, and saw a woman who extended her arms to him. "Aïssa, Aïssa!" he exclaimed in his turn, and from the garden he went to where the Moresca stood; the young girl extended her arms to him with a profound expression of love, then suddenly drawing back with anxiety:

"Oh! Heavens! Frenchman, are you wounded?"

In fact, Agénor's hands were bloody, but instead of replying, instead of giving too long an explanation, he placed one hand on her arm, and with the other pointed out the dog following him. At that terrible apparition, the young girl uttered a

cry in her turn; Mothril, who was then returning, heard that cry. His voice was heard demanding lights, and the footsteps of himself and his servants were heard approaching.

"Fly," cried the young girl, "fly; he would kill you, and I should die also, for I love you."

"Aïssa," said the knight, "I love you likewise; be faithful to me, and you shall see me again."

Then pressing the young girl to his heart, and imprinting a kiss on her lips, he lowered the visor of his helmet, drew his long sword, jumped through the window, and fled, thrusting aside the branches, and trampling on the flowers; he soon arrived outside the garden, crossed the court, rushed out of the gate, and, astonished that no attempt had been made to arrest his progress, perceived from afar off, Musaron, firm in his saddle, and holding in hand the splendid black charger given by Don Frederick.

A harsh gasping sound, accompanied the knight's track; he turned round, and the little care which the guards had taken to bar his way was explained. The dog, which would not abandon the only friend he now had, was following him.

During this time Mothril, struck with affright at the cries he had heard, was rushing to seek Aïssa. He found the young girl pale and standing by the window; he wished to question her; but to his first questions, she only replied by a gloomy silence. At last the Moor conjectured what had happened.

"Some one has entered here? reply Aïssa."

"Yes," said the young girl, "the head of the king's brother."

Mothril looked more attentively at the young girl. The print of a bloody hand had remained on her dress.

"The Frenchman has seen you," exclaimed the exasperated Mothril.

But this time Aïssa looked at him with a proud glance, and made no answer.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON ENTERED THE CASTLE OF MEDINA SIDONIA.

On the morrow of this terrible day, and as the first rays of the sun were lighting the summit of the Sierra d'Aracena, Mothril, wrapped in a large white mantle, was taking his leave of the king, Don Pedro, at the bottom of the steps of the Alcazar.

"I can answer for my servant," said the Moor, "he is the fit man, sire, to execute your vengeance—his arm is sure and swift, besides, I shall watch over him. During this time cause the Frenchman, the accomplice of the grand master, to be sought after; and if you should fall in with him, show him no mercy."

"'Tis well," said Don Pedro, "depart quickly, and return."

"Sire," replied the Moor, "to make the better speed, I shall conduct my daughter on horseback, and not in a litter."

"Why not leave her at Seville?" replied the king. "Has she not a household of her own, her women, her duennas?"

"Sire, I cannot abandon her. Wherever I go, she must follow me. She is my treasure, and one which I must watch over."

"Ah, ah! Moor, you bring to my mind the

history of Count Julian and the beautiful Florinda."*

"I should remember it," replied Mothril, "since it was to her that the Moors owed their entry into Spain, and that I owe, consequently, the honour of being your highness's minister."

"But," replied Don Pedro, "you never told me that you had so beautiful a daughter!"

"'Tis true," said the Moor, "my daughter is very beautiful."

"So beautiful, that you adore her on both knees. Do you not?"

Mothril pretended to be confused by these words.

"I," said he, "who could have told your highness?"

"No one has told me; I have seen," replied the king; "she is not your daughter."

"Ah! sire," said Mothril, "do not believe that she is either my wife or my mistress."

"But what is it, then?"

"One day the king will know; but in the mean time I have to execute your highness's orders."

And taking his leave of Don Pedro, he departed.

In fact, the young girl, enveloped in a large white mantle, which allowed only her great black eyes and her arched eye-brows to be seen, formed a part of the Moor's suite; but this last lied when he said that she was to accompany him during all the road. At two leagues from Seville, he turned aside from the road, and placed the young girl in safety in the palace of a wealthy Moorish woman, in whom he confided.

And then, urging his horse rapidly forward, he pursued his journey with an uninterrupted course.

Soon he crossed the Guadalete, at the very spot where the king, Don Roderick, had disappeared after the famous battle, which lasted seven days, and between Tarifa and Cadiz, he saw the castle of Medina Sidonia rising into the air, laden with all that gloom which weighs on the abodes of prisoners.

It was there that a fair and pale young woman was living for a long time, with one other woman as her only companion. Guards were multiplied around her as if she had been the most dangerous of prisoners, and pitiless eyes followed her incessantly, whether with hanging arms and drooping head she slowly paced those gardens, parched up by the sun; or whether reclined behind her window, closed by iron bars, she allowed her melancholy look to wander through space, while sighing for liberty or following the infinite and ceaselessly recurring waves of the measureless ocean.

This woman was Blanche of Bourbon, wife of Don Pedro, whom he had disdained from after the very first night of her marriage. She was slowly consuming away, amid tears and the regret of having sacrificed to a vain phantom of ambition the happy future which she had one day dreamt of in the blue eyes of Don Frederick.

When the unhappy woman saw the young girls who had been gleaning the grapes of Xeres and Marbella pass through the country; when she heard their lovers' songs as they went to meet them, then her heart swelled, then tears started from her eyes. And she also, reflecting that she might have been born far from the throne, and as free as one of those young vintagers with their sun-burnt complexion, invoked a cherished image, and murmured to herself a name which she had often pronounced before.

Moreover, ever since Blanche of Bourbon had

* The La Cava above alluded to P.—TRANSLATOR.

been a prisoner there, Medina Sidonia seemed a spot under a curse. The guards kept at a distance the traveller constantly suspected of being an accomplice, or, at least, a friend. The queen had only one moment of liberty, or rather of solitude, each day; it was the hour when making the siesta under that burning sun, the sentinels, ashamed themselves of so many precautions taken to keep guard over a woman, leant on their lances, and slept under the shade of some green plantain, or some white wall.

Then the queen descended to a terrace which bordered the ditch filled with running water, and if afar off she could descry any traveller, hoping that he might be a friend, who would bear tidings of her to King Charles, she would extend to him her supplicating hands.

But no one had yet replied to that appeal of the prisoner.

One day, however, she saw approaching on the road from Arcos, two horsemen, of whom one, notwithstanding the glare of the sun streaming on his helmet, appeared at ease in his complete armour. He bore his lance so proudly, that from the first glance one would pronounce him a valiant knight. From the moment she first perceived him, Queen Blanche's looks were riveted upon him, and could not be withdrawn. He was advancing at the rapid gallop of a vigorous black charger, and although he had clearly come from Seville, although he appeared to shape his course towards Medina Sidonia, and although the messengers come hitherto from Seville, had hitherto been heralds of misfortune, Queen Blanche experienced an emotion of joy, rather than of fear, on beholding the knight.

When he, in his turn, beheld her, he stopped. A vague presentiment of good fortune then made the prisoner's heart beat; she approached the rampart, made the sign of the cross, and, as was her custom, joined her hands.

Whereon, the unknown spurring on his horse, made at a gallop, straight on for the terrace.

An apprehensive gesture on the part of the queen, indicated the sentinel sleeping, as he leant against a sycamore.

The knight alighted, made a sign to his squire to come up to him, and whispered in his ear for a few seconds. The squire conducted the two horses behind a rock, which concealed them from sight, then returned near his master, and both gained an enormous clump of myrtle bushes, and lanceolated plants, which was within call of the terrace.

The worthy knight, who like Charlemagne, had never been able to make with a pen any other signs than such as resembled a poniard, or a sword, ordered his squire, more lettered than himself, to write quickly with a pencil, which this lad always carried about him, some words on a large pebble.

Then he signified to the queen to keep out of harm's way, as he was about to hurl the stone on the terrace.

Then with a vigorous arm, he launched the missile; it cut the air, and fell on the pavement a few yards from the queen. The noise made by its fall caused the slumbering soldier to open his eyes, but as he perceived no one near him, save the motionless and desolate queen, whom he was accustomed to see every day at the same spot, he shut his dazzled eyes and soon went to sleep again.

The queen went to pick up the pebble and read these words:--

"Are you the unfortunate Queen Blanche, sister to my king?"

The queen's reply was sublime in its majestic grief. Crossing her arms over her bosom, she made an inclination of the head, which caused two great tears to fall at her feet.

The knight bowed respectfully, and speaking to his squire, who had already provided himself with a flint-stone for a second letter.

"Write this," said he.

"Madam, can you be on this terrace this evening at eight o'clock? I have a letter of Don Frederick's to deliver to you."

The squire obeyed.

The second missive arrived as happily as the first. Blanche made a joyful gesture, reflected some time and replied,

"No!"

A third stone was hurled.

"Is there a means to penetrate to you?" he asked, forced to supply by gestures the use of his voice, which might have awaked the sentinel, or of writing which his arm had not the strength to fling to the other side of the ditch.

The queen pointed out a sycamore to the knight, by availing himself of which he might climb the wall; then she indicated a gate which, from that wall, led to the tower which she inhabited.

The knight bowed, he had understood.

At that moment the soldier awoke and resumed his rounds.

The knight remained some time hidden; then, availing himself of a moment in which the sentinel's attention was directed to another quarter, he glided with his squire behind the rock where the horses were waiting for him.

"Sir," said the squire, "we have undertaken a difficult piece of work; why did you not send at once the grand master's letter to the queen? I, for my part, would not have failed to effect it."

"Because a mischance might have detached it in its flight, and the queen would not have believed me had the billet been lost. We must wait then till the evening, and seek a means to arrive on the terrace, without being seen by the sentinel."

The evening came. Agénor had as yet found no means to enter the fortress. It might be half-past seven o'clock.

Agénor was disposed to seek entry without violence, if possible, and rather by stratagem than force. But, as was usual, Musaron's opinion was diametrically opposite to that of his master.

"Whatever way you set about it, sir," he said, "we should always be forced to give battle and to kill. Your scruples then appear to me ill placed. To kill is always to kill. Murder is a sin at eight in the evening as well as at half-past seven. And for many reasons I maintain that the only suitable means are those I propose to employ."

As the knight felt great confidence in the judgment of his squire, he yielded to his advice. Then Musaron, with the same tranquillity as if he were contending for a silver goblet at some village fête, adjusted his cross-bow, fixed his bolt, and levelled at the Moor: almost immediately a whizzing sound was heard. Agénor, who kept his eyes fixed on the sentinel, saw his turban oscillate, and his arms open. The soldier bending inwards, opened his mouth as if to cry out, but no sound escaped from his throat; stifled by blood, and sustained by the wall against which he was leaning, he remained almost upright, and totally without motion.

Agénor turned towards Musaron, who was re-justing the cross-bow, whence the arrow lodged in the Moor's heart had just taken flight.

"Now," said the squire, "as the infidel no longer

exists to give the alarm, let us go on. Nothing exists to prevent us, the terrace is deserted, and the road open."

They bounded towards the ditch, which they crossed by swimming. The water glided over the knight's armour as over a fish's scales. As to Musaron, always full of precautions, and attentive to himself, he had stripped off his clothes and bound them in a parcel round his head. When they arrived at the foot of the sycamore tree he dressed himself, and clinging to the branches of the sycamore, while his master was shaking out the water trickling through all the rivets of his cuirass, he was the first to arrive at a level with the rampart.

"Well!" said Mauléon, "what do you see?"

"Only," replied the squire, "the gate which is unguarded, and which you, sir, will be able to open by two blows with your axe."

Mauléon had now arrived at the same height as his squire, and could consequently judge for himself the accuracy of this assertion. The road was free, and the gate indicated, shut every evening, was all that intercepted the communication of the prisoner with the terrace.

As Musaron had suggested, Agénor, by introducing the point of his axe between the stones, first sprung the lock and then the two bolts.

The gate was opened. Opposite was a winding staircase serving as a back way to the queen's apartments, of which the principal entrance was in the interior court. On the first stage they found a door, on which the knight struck three times without being answered.

Agénor conjectured that the queen might fear some surprise.

"Fear nothing, madam, 'tis only ourselves."

"I have heard you very well," said the queen, from the other side of the door, "but are you not about to betray me?"

"We so little intend to betray you," said Agénor, "that I open this gate only that you may escape. I have killed the sentinel. We shall cross the ditch; that will be the affair of a moment, and in a quarter of an hour you will be free and in the open country."

"But have you the key of this door?" answered the queen. "I am locked in."

Agénor replied by employing the same means which had succeeded with the gate below. In an instant the second door was burst like the first.

"Thanks, a thousand times," exclaimed the queen, as she beheld her deliverers. "But," she added in a trembling and scarcely intelligible voice, "but what of Don Frederick?"

"Alas! madam," said Agénor, placing one knee on the ground, and presenting the parchment to the queen, "Don Frederick—there is his letter."

The queen read the note by the light of a lamp.

"But he is lost!" she cried; "this note is the last farewell of a man about to die!"

Agénor made no reply.

"In heaven's name!" exclaimed the queen, "in the name of your friendship for the grand master, tell me, is he dead or alive?"

"In one or the other case, you see, Don Frederick enjoins you to fly."

"But if he is no more," again cried the queen, "why should I fly? if he is dead, why should I live?"

"To obey his last wishes, madam, and to demand vengeance in his name and yours from your brother, the King of France."

At that moment the interior gate of the apartment was opened, and Blanche's nurse, who had

followed her from France, entered pale and affrighted

"Oh, madam," she said, "the castle is full of armed men who have arrived from Seville, and an enemy of the king is announced, who demands to speak with you!"

"Let us go, madam, said Agenor, "there is no time to lose."

"On the contrary," said the queen, "if I were not found at this moment, they would pursue and unfailingly rejoin us. It is better that I should receive this envoy; and then afterwards when he is quieted by my presence and by our conversation, we shall take flight."

"But, madam," resumed the knight, "what if this envoy were the bearer of some sinister command? what if his intentions were bad?"

"I shall know through him, if Don Frederick be dead or alive," answered the queen.

"Well, madam," said the knight, "if that is your only motive for receiving this man, then I must at once speak the truth. He is, alas! dead!"

"If he is dead," answered Queen Blanche, "what is it to me what this man intends to do here? Take heed for your safety, Sire de Mauleon; that is all I have to say. Tell that man, that I shall follow you," continued Blanche, addressing her nurse.

Then, as the knight still wished to retain her, she imposed obedience by a queenly gesture, and left the room.

"Sir," said Musaron, "if you take my advice, you will leave the queen to settle her affairs as she thinks proper, and we will think of getting back again. We shall certainly meet a most unhappy end here, sir; something tells me that. Let us put off the escape of the queen until to-morrow, and in the first instance —"

"Silence," said the knight, "the queen shall be freed to night, or I shall be a corpse."

"Then, sir," said the prudent Musaron, "let us at least set the doors to rights, that nothing may be perceived, if they visit the terrace. The corpse of the Moor will be discovered, sir."

"Fling it into the water."

"That plan will only serve for an hour; the obstinate fellow will return to the surface."

"One hour may, on certain occasions, suffice to save one's life," answered the knight. "Go."

"I feel inclined," said Musaron, "at once to remain with and to leave you; if I don't leave, the Moor will be found; if I do leave, I am afraid some harm will befall you, during the instant that I leave you by yourself."

"And what harm do you fear while I have my sword and dagger?"

"Ahem!" said Musaron.

"Go then—you lose time."

Musaron made three steps towards the door, but suddenly stopping:

"Ah! sir," said he, "do you hear that voice?"

In fact, the sound of some words somewhat loudly spoken had reached them, and the knight was listening.

"One would say that was Mothril's voice!" said the knight; "it is, however, impossible."

"Nothing is impossible where Moors, hell, and magic are concerned," replied Musaron, rushing to the door with a rapidity which evinced his desire to find himself once more in the open air.

"If it be Mothril, that is a reason the more to go to the queen," exclaimed Agénor; "for if it be Mothril, the queen is lost."

And he made a movement to execute his generous inclination.

"Sir," said Musaron, holding him back by his surcoat, "you know I am no coward; only I am prudent, I do not conceal that, I make it my boast. Well! wait yet a few minutes, my good master, and afterwards I will follow you to hell if you think proper."

"Let us wait then," answered the knight; "perhaps you are in the right."

However the voice still continued speaking; gradually its tones became more dull; while, on the contrary, the queen, who had at first spoken low, by degrees resumed an energetic tone. To this strange dialogue succeeded a short interval of silence and then a horrible cry.

Agénor could restrain himself no longer, and rushed into the passage.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON WAS CHARGED BY BLANCHE OF BOURBON TO DELIVER A RING TO THE QUEEN OF FRANCE, HER SISTER.

THIS is what had happened, and was happening to the queen.

Scarcely had Blanche of Bourbon traversed the passage, and mounted, following her nurse, some steps leading to her room, when the heavy tread of several soldiers resounded on the great staircase of the tower. But the troop stopped on the lower flights, two men only ascended, and one of those stopped in the passage, while the other continued his way to the queen's chamber.

"There is a knock at the door."

"Who is there?" asked the nurse, trembling all over.

"A soldier who comes on behalf of the king, Don Pedro, to deliver a message to the Lady Blanche," replied a voice.

"Open the door," said the queen.

The nurse opened and drew back before a man of lofty stature, who, dressed like a soldier in a coat of mail which protected his whole body, was further wrapped in a large white mantle, of which the hood veiled his head and the folds concealed his hands.

"Retire, good nurse," said he, with that slightly guttural accent, which distinguished all Moors even those most accustomed to speak Castilian; "retire, I have to discuss with your mistress matters of great importance."

The first inclination of the nurse was to remain, despite the soldier's injunction; but her mistress, whom she questioned by a look, signified to her to withdraw and she obeyed. But as she went through the passage, she repented her obedience, for she saw the second soldier erect against the wall, silent and in waiting, doubtless, to execute the orders of the one who had entered the queen's room.

When once the nurse had passed before that man, and felt herself separated from her mistress by those two strange visitors, as by a barrier impossible to pass, she understood that Blanche was lost.

As to this latter calm and majestic as usual, she advanced toward the pretended soldier, the messenger of the king; he lowered his head as if he feared recognition.

"And now we are alone," she said, "what have you to say?"

"Madam," replied the unknown, "the king knows that you have corresponded with his ene-

mies, which, as you are aware, is a crime of high treason."

"And is it only to-day that the king knows that?" replied the queen, with the same calmness and the same majesty. "It seems, however, to me, that I have been for a long time punished for this crime, which he assumes he has only now learnt."

The soldier raised his head and replied:—

"Madam, the king speaks not this time of the enemies of his throne, but of the enemies of his honour. The Queen of Castile ought not to be suspected, and yet she has given occasion to scandal."

"Perform your mission," said the queen, "and leave when it is accomplished."

The soldier remained an instant silent, as if he had hesitated to go further. Then he continued:—

"Do you know the history of Don Guttiere?"

"No," said the queen.

"It is, however, recent, and has made some noise."

"They are precisely recent things of which I am ignorant," replied the prisoner, "and noise, however great, can scarcely penetrate the walls of this castle."

"Well, then, I must tell it you," replied the messenger.

The queen, forced to listen, remained erect, calm, and dignified.

"Don Guttiere," said the messenger, "had married a young woman, beautiful, and sixteen years of age, exactly the age of your highness, when wedded to the king, Don Pedro."

The queen disregarded this allusion, notwithstanding its directness.

"This woman," continued the soldier, "before being the Sennora Guttiere, was called Donna Mencia, and under this, her maiden name, she had loved a young nobleman, who was no other than the king's brother, the Count Henry of Trans-tamara."

The queen trembled.

"One night, on returning home, Don Guttiere found her all trembling and confused; he questioned her; she pretended that she had seen a man hidden in her chamber. Don Guttiere took a light and looked; but he found nothing, save a poniard, so rich, that he saw very well such a weapon, could not belong to any ordinary gentleman. The maker's name was on the hilt; he went to find him, and asked to whom he had sold that dagger."

"To the infant, Don Henry, brother to Don Pedro," replied the maker.

"Don Guttiere knew all that he desired to know. He could not revenge himself on the prince, Don Henry, for he was an old Castilian, full of respect and veneration for his masters, and who would not, on whatever provocation, dip his hands in royal blood."

"But Donna Mencia was the daughter of a mere gentleman; he could avenge himself on her, and he did avenge himself."*

"How so?" asked the queen, carried away by the interest inspired by the recital of this adventure, which had so much analogy to her own position.

"Oh! in a very simple manner," said the messenger. "He went to wait at the door of a poor surgeon, named Ludovico, and as this last was

* This compromise between cowardice and thirst for blood, and the concentration of animosity on the defenceless, is very revolting, and seems scarcely likely to inspire any other feeling than disgust, even in one so ferocious as Mothril. Such things are more easily perpetrated than approved.—TRANSLATOR.

about to enter his house, he put a dagger to his throat, bandaged his eyes, and brought him to his house. When he arrived there, he took off the bandage. A woman lay bound on the bed, having two lighted tapers at her head, two others at her feet, as if she had been already dead. Her left arm especially was so fastly tied, that no efforts she could have made would have loosed the bonds. The surgeon remained thunderstruck, he could understand nothing of this vision.

"Bleed that woman," said Don Guttiere, "and let her blood run till she dies."

"The surgeon wished to resist, but he felt the dagger of Don Guttiere penetrating his clothes, and ready to penetrate his breast, and he obeyed. The same night a man, pallid and covered with blood, flung himself at the feet of Don Pedro."

"Sire, sire," said he, "this night I have been dragged, with bandaged eyes, and a dagger at my throat, to a house, where I have been compelled by violence to bleed a woman, and to let the blood flow till she died."

"And who compelled you?" said the king. "What is the murderer's name?"

"I know not," replied Ludovico. "But, unperceived, I dipped my hand in the basin, and, as I went out, I pretended to stumble, and pressed my blood-stained hand against the door. Make search, sire, and the door on which you will find the mark of a hand imprinted in blood, will be the abode of the guilty."

"Don Pedro, the king, took with him the Alcalde of Seville, and they went together through the city, till they had found the terrible blazon; then they knocked at the door, and Don Guttiere opened it himself, for through the window he had recognised his illustrious visitor."

"Don Guttiere," said the king, "where is Donna Mencia?"

"You shall see her, sir," replied the Spaniard.

"And conducting the king into the room, where the tapers were still burning, and where the basin full of warm blood still smoked."

"Sire," said he, "behold her whom you seek."

"What had that woman done to you?" asked the king.

"She had betrayed me, sire."

"And why did you avenge yourself on her and not on her accomplice?"

"Because her accomplice is the Prince Don Henry of Trans-tamara, brother of Don Pedro, the king."

"Have you a proof of what you are now saying?" asked the king.

"There is the prince's own dagger, which he let drop in my wife's chamber, and which I found on coming in."

"Tis well," said the king; "have Donna Mencia buried, and cause the door of your house, on which is the imprint of a blood-stained hand, to be cleansed."

"Not so, sire," replied Don Guttiere; "every man who exercises a public occupation is accustomed to place the sign of his profession on his door; I am the physician of my honour, and that bloody hand is my sign."

"So be it," said Don Pedro; "let it remain there; and may it teach your second wife, if you take another bride, the veneration and fidelity which she owes to her husband."

"And nothing more was done," asked Queen Blanche.

"Yes, madam," said the messenger, "on re-entering his palace, the king, Don Pedro, exiled the infant, Don Henry."

"Well! what connection has this story with me?" asked the queen, "and where is the resemblance between Donna Mencia and myself?"

"In that, like you, she betrayed her husband's honour," replied the soldier; "and in that, as in Don Guttiere's case, whose conduct he approved, and to whom he granted pardon, the king, Don Pedro, has already executed justice on your accomplice."

"On my accomplice! what mean you, soldier?" murmured Blanche, to whom these words recalled Don Frederick's letter, and her past apprehensions.

"I mean that the grand master is dead," coldly replied the soldier; "that he died for the crime of high treason against the honour of his king, and that guilty of the same crime as him, you must, like him, prepare for death."

Blanche had remained frozen, not by the announcement that she was to die, but by the news that him whom she loved was dead.

"Dead!" said she; "it is then quite true he is dead?"

The most skilful inflection of the human voice could scarcely render all the despair and terror which the young woman threw into those words.

"Yes, madam," resumed the Moorish soldier, "and I have brought with me thirty soldiers to escort the corpse of the queen from Medina Sidonia to Seville, that the honours due to her rank may be rendered her, although guilty."

"Soldier," said the queen, "I have already said that the king, Don Pedro, was my judge, and that you were only my executioner."

"Rightly spoken, madam," said the soldier.

Then he drew from under his cloak a long and pliant rope of silk, at the end of which he made a running knot.

This cold cruelty revolted the queen.

"Oh!" she cried, "how has the king, Don Pedro, been able to find throughout his kingdom a Spaniard willing to accept so infamous a commission?"

"I am no Spaniard—I am a Moor!" said the soldier raising his head and putting aside the white hood which veiled his face.

"Mothril!" she exclaimed, "Mothril, the scourge of Spain."

"A man of illustrious race, madam," replied the Moor with a sneer, "and who will not dishonour the head of his queen by his touch."

And he made a step towards Blanche, the fatal rope in his hand. The instinct of self-preservation made the young woman recoil from the assassin, by a step equal to that he had made in approaching her.

"Oh! you will not kill me thus, before I have prayed, and in a state of sin!" cried Blanche.

"Madam," replied the ferocious envoy, "you are not in a state of sin, since you say that you are innocent."

"Wretch! who dare to insult your queen before you butcher her. Oh, coward! why have I not here some one of my brave Frenchmen to defend me?"

"Yes," said Mothril, sneering, "but unfortunately your brave Frenchmen are on the other side of the Pyrenean mountains; and unless your God perform a miracle——"

"My God is great!" cried Blanche.

"Help! sir knight! help!"

And she rushed towards the door, but before she had reached the threshold Mothril had flung the rope which stopped on her shoulders. Then he tightened the loop, and it was at that moment

that the queen on feeling the collar closing on her throat, uttered her lamentable cry. It was then also that Mauléon, forgetting the advice of his squire, rushed in the direction whence the queen's voice was heard.

"Help me!" cried the young woman in a stifled voice, as she struggled on the floor.

"Call on, call on," said the Moor, tightening the rope to which the unfortunate captive grasped with stiffened fingers; call on, and we shall see who first will come to your rescue—your God or your lover."

Suddenly spurs clanked along the passage, then before the astonished Moor the knight appeared on the threshold.

The queen uttered a cry in which joy strove with pain. Agénor raised his sword, but Mothril, with a vigorous arm, forced the queen to arise and made a buckler of her body.

The groans of the unfortunate woman had subsided into a low and stifled moaning, her arms were convulsed by the violence of pain, and her lips were becoming blue.

"Kebir!" cried Mothril, in Arabic; "Kebir! to my rescue."

And he covered himself at once with the queen's body, and with one of those formidable scimitars of which the interior curve when it seizes a head cuts it off, and makes it fall like the blade of wheat under the reaper's sickle.

"Ah! misbeliever," exclaimed Agénor, "you wish to kill a daughter of the royal house of France."

And he strove to reach Mothril with his sword over the queen's head.

But at the same moment he felt himself seized by the middle of the body, and drawn backwards by Kebir, whose two arms girdled him with iron.

He turned to meet his new antagonist, but it was a loss of time for his purpose. The queen had fallen on her knees; she no longer cried, nor groaned; she did not even gasp; she appeared dead.

Kebir sought to find some unguarded spot on the knight's body, where, on unclasping his arms, he might drive his dagger, which he held between his teeth.

This scene had taken less time in occurring than the lightning in its flash and eclipse. It was time enough for Musaron to follow his master, and to arrive himself in the queen's chamber.

He came.

The cry which he uttered on seeing what was taking place, apprised Agénor of the assistance which was approaching.

"Attend first to the queen!" cried the knight, still in the grasp of the robust Kebir.

There was an instant silence; then Mauléon heard a whizzing sound at his ear, then he felt the Moor's arms relaxing. The arrow, launched from Musaron's crossbow, had pierced his throat.

"To the door, quickly!" said Agénor; "shut off all communication: I will kill the assassin."

And, shaking off the corpse of Kebir, which had remained attached to him in a dying grasp, and which fell heavily on the floor, he bounded towards Mothril, and before the Moor had time to put himself on his guard, he struck him so violent a blow, that the heavy sword cut through the double iron mail protecting his head, and pierced to his skull. The Moor's eyes became clouded, his black and thick blood deluged his beard, and he fell on Blanche, as if, in his last convulsions, he wished to stifle his victim.

Agénor thrust the Moor aside with his foot, and

leaning towards the queer, unloosed the cord which remained almost entirely hidden in the flesh. A long sigh only indicated that the queen was not yet dead, but all her person seemed already paralysed.

"The victory is ours!" cried Musaron. "Sir, do you take the young lady by the head, I will take her by the feet, and thus we will bear her away."

As if she had heard these words—as if she wished to assist her deliverers, the queen rose up by a convulsive movement, and life returned to her lips.

"It is useless—quite useless," she said; "leave me; I am already more than half in the grave; a cross is all I want; let me die kissing that symbol of our redemption."

Agénor gave her the handle of his sword to kiss, as that formed a cross.

"Alas! alas," said the queen; "I have been such a short time on the earth, and must I already leave it? I shall join in heaven my sister virgins. God will pardon me, for I have loved and suffered much."

"Come, come," said the knight; "there is still time; we will save you."

She seized Agénor's hand.

"No, no!" she said; "for me all is over. You have done all that you could do. Fly—quit Spain, return to France, go and find my sister, relate to her all that you have seen, and let her avenge us. I will go and tell Don Frederick what a noble and faithful friend you are."

And detaching from her finger a ring which she presented to the knight—

"You will return this ring to her," she said; "it is the one she gave me at the moment of her departure, in the name of her husband, King Charles."

And raising herself a second time to the cross of Agénor's sword, she expired at the moment she touched the symbolic iron with her lips.

"Sir," cried Musaron, his ear stretched to catch all sound from the passage, "they are coming, they are coming, they run, there are many of them."

"The corpse of my queen must not be found confounded with those of her butchers," said Agénor. "Help me, Musaron."

And he took the corpse of Blanche, seated it majestically on a chair of carved wood, and placed her foot on Mothril's bloody head, as painters and sculptors have placed the foot of the virgin on the bruised head of the serpent.

"And now let us leave," said Agénor, "if indeed we are not surrounded."

Two minutes afterwards, the two Frenchmen found themselves under the vault of heaven, and taking again the direction of the sycamore, they saw the corpse of the sentinel, which in the same attitude, and always sustained against the wall which served as its support, seemed still to watch with its large eyes which death had left unclosed.

They were already on the opposite side of the ditch when the brandishing of torches and redoubled cries told them that the secret of the tower was discovered.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON LEFT FOR FRANCE, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM ON THE ROAD.

AGENOR took, to return to France, nearly the same road that he had followed to enter Spain.

Alone, and consequently inspiring no fear, poor and therefore awaking no envy, he hoped to perform successfully the mission which the dying queen had entrusted to him; however, it was necessary to be wary on the road.

Firstly, of the lepers, who it was said poisoned fountains, with a mixture of hair steeped in grease, viper's heads, and toad's feet:

Then of the Jews leagued with the lepers and generally with every thing animate or inanimate that could do mischief to the Christians:

Then of the King of Navarre, an enemy to the King of France, and consequently to the French:

Then of the "Jacques," who having for a long while striven to excite the people against the nobles, had at last succeeded in rousing the flail and pitchfork against the coat of arms:

Then of the English, traitorously posted in all the best corners of the fine kingdom of France, at Bayonne, at Bordeaux, in Dauphiné, in Normandy, in Picardy, and even if they thought fit, in the suburbs of Paris.

Lastly, of the great companies, heterogeneous mixtures, compounded of all the preceding ingredients, and furnishing against the traveller, against the inhabitant, against property, beauty, power, wealth, an inexhaustibly craving multitude of lepers, Jews, Navarrese, Englishmen, and insurgent peasants, without counting that all other countries in Europe had furnished to every band overrunning France, a sample of the most desperate and worst part of their population. There were even Arabs in these curiously variegated great companies; only through the spirit of contradiction, they had become Christians, which they might do with a better grace, since, on their part, the Christians had become Arabs.

These inconveniences, of which we have given but an insufficient list, excepted, Agénor travelled in the most easy way in the world.

The traveller of that time was under the necessity of studying, following, and imitating the manœuvre of the field sparrow. That bird takes not a flight, a leap, a motion, without turning his head expeditiously to the four cardinal points, to see if he cannot perceive a gun or a net, a sling, a dog, a child, a rat, or a kite.

Musaron was that unquiet and pillaging sparrow; he had been charged by Agénor with the custody of the purse, and did not wish that its slender mediocrity of gilding should be reduced to absolute nullity.

Thus, he guessed the lepers from afar off, scented the Jews at five hundred paces distance, saw the English in every bush, saluted the Navarrese with politeness, showed his long knife and short cross-bow to the peasants; as to the great companies he dreaded them much less than Mauléon, or rather did not dread them at all.

"For," said he to his master, "if we are made prisoners, sir, we will enlist ourselves in those great companies to get our ransom, and we will pay our liberty with the liberty we steal from others."

"All that will be very well, when I have accomplished my mission," said Agénor; "then anything may happen that pleases God, but in the meantime I hope that nothing will happen to us."

They passed thus, without hindrance, through Roussillon, Languedoc, Dauphine, the Lyonnais, and arrived at Chalons sur Saône. Previous impunity caused their misfortune: convinced that nothing would happen to them now that they were so near the post, they risked travelling by night, and the morrow of that night, near daybreak, they



fell into an ambushade so numerous and so well laid, that there was no possibility of resistance; so that the prudent Musaron put his hand on his master's arm, when he was inconsiderately about to draw his sword, and they were taken without striking a blow. What they had most dreaded, or rather what the knight had most dreaded, had happened; they were, both himself and Musaron, in the power of a captain of a company, one Messire Hugh de Caverley; that is, of a man who was at once an Englishman by birth, a Jew by his understanding, an Arab by his character, a "Jacques" by his inclinations, a Navarrese by his cunning, and almost a leper above all that; for, as he said, he had made war in such hot countries and had thereby got so accustomed to heat, that he could never quit his iron armour and gauntlets.

Musaron and the knight were immediately conducted before this chief. He was a man who wished to see everything and question everybody in his own person; for, in that time of danger, he feared

lest some prince in clownish disguise should be let slip by his followers, and that he should lose the opportunity of making a fortune.

He was, therefore, very speedily well informed of all Mauleon's affairs, such as could be avowed, at least; for as to the mission on which he was sent by Queen Blanche, there was no question of that in the first instance. The price of a ransom was the only thing talked of.

"Excuse me," said Caverley, "I was there on the road like a spider under a beam. I was waiting for something or somebody, you came, I took you; but there was no ill intention against you; alas! since King Charles V. has governed the country; that is, since the close of the war, we don't gain our livelihood. You are a capital horseman, and I would let you go with all courtesy if we lived in ordinary times; but in such a time of famine as this, d'ye see, we must pick up the crumbs."

"Here are mine," said Mauleon, showing the partizan the bottom of his purse. "I swear to you now in God's name, and by the portion I hope for

"In paradise, that neither in lands, money, nor in any other goods, do I possess anything else. Therefore of what use can I be to you? Let me, therefore, take my way."

"In the first place, my young friend," replied the captain, Caverley, glancing at the knight's stalwart frame and martial bearing, "you would help to make a capital effect in the front rank of our company; then there is your horse; further, your squire; but it is not these things which make you a valuable capture in my eyes."

"And what unhappy circumstance," asked Agénor, "makes me so valuable in your eyes? Tell me, I beg."

"You are a knight, are you not?"

"Yes, and armed at Narbonne, by the hand of one of the first princes in Christendom."

"Therefore you are a precious hostage for me, since you acknowledge that you are a knight."

"A hostage?"

"Certainly. Should King Charles take one of my men, one of my lieutenants, and want to make him swing, I threaten to make you swing also, and that keeps him in check. If, notwithstanding this threat, he really does swing him up, then I have you swung up in your turn, and it vexes him to have a gentleman hung. But, pardon me," added Caverley, "I see on your hand a jewel which I had not hitherto remarked, something resembling a ring. Faith! have the goodness to show me that, sir knight. I have a great fancy for well-executed trifles; above all, when the costliness of the material adds to the value of the workmanship."

Mauléon now easily perceived the sort of person he had to deal with. Captain Caverley was the chief of a band; he had made himself a leader of brigands, from seeing, as he himself said, nothing further to be done by pursuing honestly his military profession.

"Captain," said Agénor, withdrawing his hand, "do you respect anything in this world?"

"Everything which I fear," replied the condottiere; "it is true I fear nothing."

"That is vexatious," said Agénor, with coolness, "as otherwise this ring, which is worth —"

"Three hundred livres of Tournay," interrupted Caverley, casting a glance at the jewel, "according to the weight of gold, and without reckoning the workmanship."

"Well! this ring, captain, which by your own avowal is worth three hundred livres of Tournay, and only that, would, if you had been afraid of anything, have brought you a thousand."

"How so, pray, explain, my young friend? One learns at all ages, and I take great delight in receiving instruction."

"Have you a word to stand by, captain?"

"I think I had one formerly; but I have given it so often, I am afraid that nought remains."

"Well, do you believe in that of others who, not having given theirs away, still retain it?"

"There is only one man whose word I will trust, and that man, sir knight, is not you."

"Who is he?"

"He is Messire Bertrand Duguesclin; but would Messire Duguesclin be your surety?"

"I do not know him," said Agénor, "at least personally; but though he is a stranger, yet if you allow me to go where I wish, if you allow me to deliver this ring to the person destined to receive it, I promise you in the name of Messire Duguesclin himself, not a thousand livres of Tournay, but a thousand golden crowns."

"I prefer having the three hundred livres which

the ring is worth, down," said Caverley, with a laugh, extending his hand towards Agénor.

The knight quickly drew back, and going to a window which opened on the river: "This ring," he said, drawing it from his finger, and extending his arm over the Saône, "is the ring of Queen Blanche, of Castile, and I bear it to the King of France. If you give me your permission to depart, which I will trust to, I will promise you a thousand golden crowns. If you refuse me, I fling this ring into the river, and ring and ransom, you lose all."

"Yes, but I keep you, and I make you hang."

"Which is a very slender compensation for so skilful a calculator as you are; and the proof that you don't esteem my death at the price of a thousand crowns is, that you don't say no."

"I don't say no," replied Caverley, "because——"

"Because you are afraid, captain. Say no, and the ring is lost, and you may have me hung afterwards if you think proper. Well, what say you, yes or no?"

"By my troth," said Caverley, struck with admiration, "this is what I call a pretty sort of fellow, even to the squire who hasn't budged. May the devil take me! by our holy father the Pope's spleen, I love you, sir knight."

"Very good, and I am duly grateful; but answer me."

"What do you wish me to answer?"

"Yes or no; I ask nothing else, and 'tis soon said."

"Well then!—yes."

"That's all right," said the knight, replacing the ring on his finger.

"But on one condition, however," continued the captain.

"What is that?"

Caverley was about to reply, when a violent tumult attracted his attention; this tumult occurred at the extremity of the village, or rather of the camp, seated on the border of the river and surrounded with forests. Many soldiers showed their startled heads at the door, crying out:

"Captain! captain!"

"Very well, very well," replied the condottiere, accustomed to these sort of alarms, "I am coming."

Then turning towards the knight:

"As for you," said he, "remain here, twelve men will guard you; I hope that is doing you honour, ahem!"

"So be it," said the knight; "but don't let them come near me; for at the first step they make I will fling this ring into the Saône."

"Do not approach him, but do not quit him either," said Caverley to his bandits.

And, saluting the knight, without having raised for an instant the visor of his helmet, he went at a step which marked the carelessness of habit, to that part of the camp where the noise was greatest.

During all the time of his absence, Mauléon and his squire remained standing near the window; the guards were at the other side of the room and remained stationary before the door.

The tumult continued, although gradually diminishing; at last it subsided altogether, and half an hour after his departure, Hugh de Caverley reappeared, bringing with him in his train, a new prisoner, just captured by the company, which was spread over the country like a net for catching larks.

The prisoner, of a tall and well-knit figure, ap-

peared to be a country gentleman; he was accoutred in a rusty helmet and a cuirass, which might have been picked up by one of his ancestors on the field of battle of Roncesvaux. In this equipment the first disposition he provoked was one to laughter; but something haughty in his bearing and bold in his countenance, though he strove to assume an air of humility, enjoined, if not respect, at least circumspection on the railers.

"Have you searched him well?" asked Caverley.

"Yes, captain," replied a German lieutenant, to whom Caverley was indebted for the happy choice of the position he occupied—a choice suggested, indeed, to the lieutenant, not by the advantages of the position, but by the excellence of the wines which the vintage of the Saône produced.

"When I say him," resumed the captain, "I mean him and his followers."

"Be at your ease—the operation has been thoroughly performed," replied the German lieutenant.

"And what did you find on them?"

"One mark of gold and two marks of silver."

"Bravo!" said Caverley; "the day appears to be a lucky one."

Then turning towards his new capture:

"Now," said he, "let us chat a little, my paladin. Although you strongly resemble a nephew of the Emperor Charlemagne, I should not be sorry to learn who you are from your own mouth. Tell me then at once frankly, without restriction and without reserve."

"I am, as you may learn by my accent," replied the unknown, "a poor gentleman of Arragon come to visit France."

"You have done quite right," said Caverley. "France is a fine country."

"Yes," said the lieutenant, "only the moment you have chosen is unlucky."

Mauléon could not prevent himself smiling, as he could appreciate, better than any, the justice of this observation.

As to the foreign gentleman, he remained immovable.

"We must get on," said Caverley; "you have as yet told us only your country, that is half of what we want to know. Now what is your name?"

"Should I tell it you, you would not know it," replied the knight; "besides, I have no name, I am a bastard."

"Unless you are a Jew, a Turk, or a Moor," replied the captain, "you have a baptismal name at least."

"My name is Henry," answered the knight.

"You did right to tell me. Now raise your visor a little, that we may see your good Arragonese face."

The unknown hesitated and cast his eyes around him, as if to make sure that there was no one there who knew him.

Caverley, impatient at this delay, made a sign, on which one of the adventurers approached the prisoner, and striking the button of the helmet with the hilt of his sword, raised the iron visor, which concealed the countenance of the unknown.

Mauléon uttered an exclamation; that face was the most striking portrait of the unhappy grand master, Don Frederick, of whose death, however, he could not doubt, since he had held his head in his hands.

Musaron grew pale with horror, and made the sign of the cross.

"Ah! ah! you know each other," said Caverley,

looking alternately at Mauléon and the knight with the rusty helmet.

At this remark, the unknown looked at Mauléon with some anxiety; but as he perceived at the first glance that he now beheld the knight for the first time, his countenance became more composed.

"Well?" said Caverley.

"You are mistaken," said the last comer, "I do not know that gentleman."

"And you?"

"Nor I neither."

"Why then did you just now utter such an exclamation?" asked the captain, still somewhat incredulous, notwithstanding the double denial of his prisoners.

"Because I thought, when the soldier struck his visor, that he was about to take off his head."

Caverley laughed.

"We must have a very bad reputation, then," said he; "but tell me frankly, sir knight, do you or do you not know this Spaniard?"

"On my knightly word," answered Agénor, "I see him now for the first time."

Yet, even while he made this oath which affirmed the simple truth, Mauléon remained quite agitated by that extraordinary resemblance.

Caverley directed his glance first on one, then on the other. The unknown knight had become quite impenetrable, and seemed a marble statue.

"Let us get on," said Caverley, impatient to decipher this mystery; "you are the first in date, Chevalier de ——— I have forgotten to ask your name, but perhaps you also are a bastard."

"Yes," said the knight, "I am."

"Good," said the adventurer. "Then you have no name either?"

"Yes," said the knight, "I have one; I am called Agénor, and as I was born at Mauléon, I am usually called the Bastard of Mauléon."

Caverley cast a rapid glance at the unknown, to see if the name pronounced by the knight had produced any impression.

Not a muscle of his face moved.

"Well, Bastard of Mauléon," said Caverley, "you were the first comer; we will settle your business first, then we will pass on to that of Sir Henry. As we were saying, the ring for two thousand crowns."

"For a thousand crowns," replied Agénor.

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"It may be so. The ring then for a thousand crowns. But you certify that it really is the ring of Blanche de Bourbon."

"Yes," said the knight.

The unknown now made in his turn a movement of surprise, which did not escape Mauléon.

"Queen of Castile," continued Caverley.

"Queen of Castile," resumed Agénor.

The unknown became doubly attentive.

"Sister-in-law to King Charles V." again resumed the captain.

"Sister-in-law to the king, Charles V."

The unknown had become all ears.

"The same," asked Caverley, "who is a prisoner in the Castle of Medina Sidonia, by the orders of the king Don Pedro, her husband?"

"The same who has lately been strangled by the orders of her husband, Don Pedro, in the Castle of Medina Sidonia," replied the unknown, in a cold but earnest tone of voice.

Mauléon looked on him with astonishment.

"Ah! ah!" said Caverley, "matters are becoming complicated."

"How did you learn that fact?" asked Mauléon; "I thought I was the first to bring the news to France."

"Did I not tell you," replied the unknown, "that I was a Spaniard, and came from Arragon? I learnt that catastrophe, which just before my departure was making great noise in Spain."

"But if Queen Blanche of Bourbon be dead," asked Caverley; "how is it that you have her ring?"

"Because she gave it me before dying, that I might bear it to her sister the Queen of France, and tell her at the same time who caused her death, and how she died."

"You were present then at her last moments?" asked the knight with interest.

"Yes," replied Agénor; "and it was even I who killed her assassin."

"A Moor?" asked the unknown.

"Mothril," replied the knight.

"He was the man, but you did not kill him."

"How so?"

"You only wounded him."

"Zounds!" said Musaron; "had I only known that, I, who had still eleven crossbolts in my quiver."

"Well," said Caverley, "all this may have very great interest for you, gentlemen, but for me, not the slightest in the world, seeing that I am neither a Spaniard nor a Frenchman."

"Right," said Mauléon; "then the matter is agreed on. You keep what I had with me, but restore me my liberty and that of my squire."

"Nothing was said about the squire," said Caverley.

"Because it was understood without; you leave me the ring, and in exchange for the ring, I give you a thousand livres of Tournay."

"Just so," said the captain, "but there was still a little condition."

"Another condition?"

"Which I was about to tell you at the moment we were interrupted."

"'Tis true," said Agénor, "I recollect; and what was this condition?"

"It is, that besides the thousand livres at which I esteem the safe conduct which I give you, you shall also owe me a term of service in my company during the time of the first campaign on which it may please King Charles V. to employ us, or which it may please me to make on my own account."

Agénor started with surprise.

"Ah! such are my conditions," Caverley went on; "it must be thus or not at all. You will sign that you belong to the company, and having contracted that engagement, you are free for the present, that is to say."

"And if I do not return?" said Mauléon.

"Oh, you will return," replied Caverley, "as you pretend that you have a word of honour."

"Well! I accept; but with one reservation, and one only."

"What is that?"

"That you shall not, under any pretext, make me bear arms against the King of France."

"You are right; I did not think of that," said Caverley; "I who have no king but the King of England; and, moreover — We will therefore have an engagement drawn out, and you will sign it."

"I don't know how to write," said the knight, who was a sharer without any shame in the general ignorance of the nobles of that period.

"But my squire will write."

"And you will make your cross," said Caverley.

"I will do so."

He took a parchment, a pen, and tendered them to Musaron, who wrote to his dictation.

"I, Agénor, Chevalier de Mauléon, engage as soon as I shall have accomplished my mission to the king, Charles V., to return to Messire Hugh de Caverley, wherever he may be, and to serve, I and my squire, during all this first campaign, provided this first campaign be not directed against the King of France, nor against my liege lord, Monseigneur the Count of Foix."

"And the thousand livres of Tournay?" intimated Caverley.

"Right," said Agénor, "I was forgetting them."

"Yes, but I have a memory."

Agénor continued dictating to Musaron.

"And I will further remit to the said Sir Hugh de Caverley the sum of a thousand livres of Tournay, which I acknowledge I owe him in exchange for the temporary liberty he has sold me."

The squire added the date of the day and year, then the knight took the pen, much as he would have grasped a dagger, and boldly traced a sign in the form of a cross.

Caverley took the parchment, read it with the most scrupulous attention, took some sand, dried the writing, neatly folded it, and passed it under his sword-belt.

"Now," said he, "all is right. You may go. You are free."

"Listen," said the unknown. "As I have no time to lose, and as I also am called to Paris by affairs of importance, I offer to redeem myself on the same conditions as this knight. Does that suit you? Reply, but reply quickly."

Caverley began laughing.

"I know nothing of you," he said.

"Do you know more of Messire Agénor de Mauléon, who appears to have been only an hour in your hands?"

"Yes," said Caverley; "to observers like me, not so much as an hour is requisite to form our estimate of men, and during the hour that he has passed here, the knight has done something which has made me know him."

The Spanish knight gave a strange smile.

"You refuse me then," he said.

"Point-blank."

"You will repent it."

"Pshaw!"

"Listen! You have taken all that I possessed; I have, therefore, nothing to offer you at this moment. Keep my followers as hostages, keep my baggage, and allow me to leave with my horse only."

"Truly! a fine favour you propose conferring; your baggage and people are mine, since I have them in keeping."

"Then allow me at least to say two words to this young knight, as he is to depart freely."

"Two words on the subject of your ransom?"

"Certainly; at what sum do you rate it?"

"At the sum taken from you and your followers; that is to say, at one mark of gold and two of silver."

"So be it," said the knight.

"Well, then," resumed Caverley, "tell him whatever you think fit."

"Listen, sir knight," said the Spanish gentleman; and both withdrew to talk more at their ease.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE KNIGHT OF ARRAGON PURCHASED HIS RANSOM FOR TEN THOUSAND GOLDEN CROWNS.

CAPTAIN CAVERLEY kept his eyes attentively fixed on the two strangers while they conversed; but the Spaniard had drawn Agénor sufficiently far from the adventurer to prevent any words they pronounced from reaching him.

"Sir knight," said the unknown, "we are now beyond ear-shot, but not out of sight: lower, therefore, I beg, your visor, so that you may wholly escape the penetration of all those who surround you."

"And you, my lord," said Agénor, "allow me before lowering your own, to look a few moments on your face. Believe me, I feel a mournful satisfaction in doing so, which you cannot comprehend."

The unknown smiled sadly.

"Sir knight," said he, "you may look your fill at me, as I shall not lower my visor. Although not more than five or six years older than yourself, I have suffered enough to have a mastery over my countenance; it is an obedient servant which never says anything but what I wish it to say, and if it recalls to you the features of a person to whom you felt attachment, so much the better; that will encourage me to ask your good offices."

"Speak," said Agénor.

"You appear, sir knight, to have quite won your way in the mind of the bandit who has made us prisoners. It does not appear to be the same in my case, as he retains me obstinately, while he permits you to pursue your road."

"Yes, my lord," answered Agénor, surprised to discover that since they had spoken apart, the Spaniard, though retaining a slight accent, still spoke the purest French.

"Well," said the native of Arragon, "whatever be your need of continuing your journey, mine is not less great; and it is necessary that, at whatever price, I should get out of that man's hands."

"My lord," said Agénor, "if you swear to me that you are a knight, if you give me your word of honour, I will pledge my honour to Captain Caverley, that he may allow you to depart with me."

"That," exclaimed the stranger with glee, "is precisely the service which I was about to beg of you. You are as intelligent, sir knight, as you are courteous."

Agénor bowed.

"And so you are a noble," he said.

"Yes, Sir Agénor, and I may even add, that few gentlemen can boast a higher nobility than mine."

"Then," said the knight; "you have another name than that which you have given me."

"Yes, certainly," replied the knight; "but this is the very point in which your courtesy will be greatest; you must be contented with my word of honour, without knowing my name, for that name I must not divulge."

"Not even to a man whose honour you invoke, not even to a man whom you ask to be your surety?" said Agénor, with surprise.

"Sir knight," said the unknown, "I reproach myself with this circumspection as unworthy of yourself and me; but weighty interests, which are not mine only, make it obligatory. Obtain, therefore, my liberty at whatever price you please, and whatever that price be, on the honour of a gentleman, I will pay it. Then, if you will permit me to add a word, I can say that you will not repent having obliged me in this instance."

"Enough, enough, my lord," said Mauléon, "demand my services, but do not purchase them in advance."

"At a later opportunity, Sir Agénor," said the unknown, "you will appreciate the good faith which makes me thus address you. I might have deceived you for the time and told you a false name. You do not know me; you would, therefore, have been obliged to think it satisfactory."

"I just now thought of that," resumed Mauléon. "You will, therefore, be freed at the same time as myself, my lord, if Captain Hugh de Caverley preserves me in his good graces."

Agénor left the stranger who remained at the same spot, and returned towards Caverley, who was impatiently awaiting the result of the conversation.

"Well!" asked the captain, "are you more advanced than myself, my friend, and do you know who this Spaniard is?"

"A rich Toledo merchant who comes to trade in France, and who pretends that his detention would cause him serious injury. He demands my surety, would you accept it?"

"Are you willing to tender it?"

"Yes. Having shared his situation for an instant, it was natural that I should sympathise with him. Come, captain, let us settle the matter roundly."

Caverley ruminated.

"A rich merchant," he said, "and one who needs his liberty to drive his trade——"

"Sir," whispered Musaron, in his master's ear, "I think you have just used a very imprudent expression."

"I know what I am about," replied Agénor.

Musaron bowed in homage to his master's discretion.

"A rich merchant!" repeated Caverley. "The devil! then it will be dearer you understand than for a gentleman, and our first price of one gold and two silver marks cannot stand."

"I have, therefore, told you frankly how the matter stands, captain; for I do not wish to prevent your drawing from your prisoner a ransom suitable to his position."

"Decidedly, sir knight, as I have already said, you are a good sort of fellow. And what does he offer? He must have said something to you on that head, during your long conversation."

"Well," said Agénor, "he has told me I might go so far as five hundred crowns of silver or gold. Of gold—five hundred silver crowns would be robbing you."

Caverley made no reply, he still calculated.

"Five hundred golden crowns," said he, "would suffice from an ordinary merchant, but you have said a rich merchant—remember that."

"I remember it also," said the knight, "and I see I did wrong to tell you so, sir captain; but as one must bear the penalty of one's wrongs, well, we will rate the ransom at a thousand crowns, and, if I must pay five hundred for my indiscretion, well, I will pay them."

"That cannot be enough for a rich merchant," replied Caverley. "A thousand golden crowns! why, 'tis at most a knight's ransom."

Agénor questioned with his eye the person whose interests he was defending, to know if he might engage himself farther. The Spaniard gave a sign of acquiescence.

"Then," said the knight, "let us double the sum, and make an end of it."

"Two thousand golden crowns," resumed the condottiere, beginning to feel astonishment at the

high price at which the unknown rated his person. "Two thousand golden crowns; but he is then the richest merchant of Toledo! No, indeed, I think I have made a good hit, and I'll turn it to account. Let him go on doubling, and then we will see."

Agénor looked again at his client, who made him a second sign resembling the first.

"Well," said the knight, "as you are so exacting, we will go as far as four thousand golden crowns."

"Four thousand golden crowns!" cried Caverley, at once confounded and delighted; "then he is a Jew, and I am too good a Christian to let a Jew go under —"

"How much?" repeated Agénor.

"Under"—(the captain hesitated a moment at the sum he was about to mention, so exorbitant did it seem even to himself)—"under ten thousand golden crowns. Ah! i'faith, now the word's out at last, and its nothing on my word of honour."

The unknown, by an almost imperceptible sign, made known his assent.

"There's my hand," said Agénor, extending it to Caverley; "the sum will do, and our bargain's concluded."

"An instant, an instant," exclaimed Caverley; "by the Pope's spleen, I can't take the knight's surety for ten thousand crowns. I should need a prince as a guarantee for such a sum, and I know many even of such that I would not accept."

"Promise-breaker!" said Mauléon, walking straight to Caverley, and putting his hand to his sword, "I think you mistrust me."

"Eh! no, my boy," replied Caverley, "you are mistaken; it is not you that I mistrust, but him. Do you imagine, perchance, that once out of my clutches, he will pay me ten thousand golden crowns. At the first cross-road he will give you the slip, and you will never see him again; he has been so magnificent in his words, or, if you like it better, in his gestures, for I noticed the signs he made you, only because he has no intention of paying."

Notwithstanding the imperturbable self-possession of which the stranger had boasted, Agénor could see the flush of rage mantle his countenance; but he almost immediately recovered his self-command, and making a princely gesture to the knight:

"Here," said he, "Sir Agénor, I have yet another word to add."

"Do not go," resumed Caverley; "it is to seduce you by fine words, and leave the ten thousand golden crowns on your shoulders."

But the knight instinctively felt that the Spaniard was even something more than he appeared; he approached him, therefore, with entire confidence, and even with a certain deference.

"Thanks, loyal knight!" said the Spaniard, in an under tone; "you have done well to answer for me and my word; you have nothing to fear; I would pay that Caverley on the very instant if such were my pleasure, for I have in my horse's saddle diamonds to the value of more than three hundred thousand golden crowns; but the wretch would accept my ransom, and after having taken it, would not restore me my liberty. This, therefore, is what you will do: you will change horses with me, you will depart, and you will leave me here; then, at the first town you reach, you will unrip the saddle, you will take from it a leather sack, and from that leather sack you will take diamonds sufficient to make the value of ten thousand golden crowns; then, with a respectable escort, you will return in quest of me."

"My lord," said Agénor, "who, in heaven's name, are you that can dispose of so many resources?"

"I think I have already shown you confidence sufficient by placing in your hands all that I possess, to make it unnecessary that I should tell you my name."

"My lord! my lord!" said Agénor, "truly now I tremble, and you know not how many scruples beset me. That strange resemblance, your wealth, the mystery which surrounds you—My lord, I have interests to defend in France—sacred interests—and, perhaps, these interests are opposed to yours."

"Answer me," said the unknown, with the tone of a man accustomed to command; "you are going to Paris, are you not?"

"Yes," said the knight.

"You are going there to deliver to King Charles V. the Queen of Castile's ring?"

"Yes."

"You are going there to demand vengeance in her name?"

"Yes."

"Against the king, Don Pedro?"

"Against the king, Don Pedro."

"Then have no fear," resumed the Spaniard; "our interests are the same, for the king, Don Pedro, has killed my — queen; and I, also, have sworn to revenge Donna Blanche."

"Is what you have said just now the real truth?" asked Agénor.

"Sir knight," said the unknown, in a firm and majestic tone, "look at me well. You say that I resemble some one of your acquaintance; tell me who that person was?"

"Oh! my unfortunate friend!" exclaimed the knight; "oh, noble grand master! my lord, you resemble so much, that you might be mistaken for him, his highness Don Frederick."

"Yes, do I not?" said the unknown, with a smile; "a strange likeness—a fraternal likeness."

"Impossible!" said Agénor, looking at the Spaniard almost with terror.

"Go to the nearest town, sir knight," resumed the unknown; "sell the diamonds to a Jew, and tell the chief of the Spanish troop that Don Henry, of Transtamara, is the prisoner of Captain Caverley. Be calm, I see you tremble through your armour. Recollect that we are observed."

Agénor, in fact, was trembling with surprise. He saluted the prince more respectfully, perhaps, than was befitting, and went to rejoin Caverley, who met him half way.

"Well!" said the captain, placing his hand on his shoulder, "he has fine words, golden words, and you, poor boy are his dupe!"

"Captain," said Agénor, "this merchant's words are of gold indeed; for he has pointed out a means by which his ransom may be paid you before this evening."

"The ten thousand golden crowns?"

"The ten thousand golden crowns."

"Nothing is more easy," said the unknown, coming forward; "the knight will continue his way to a place which he knows, and where I have some money deposited; he will bring you this money to the amount of ten sacks, each holding a thousand golden crowns. You shall see this money, you shall handle it, that you may be thoroughly convinced, and when you are convinced, when the gold is in your coffers, you will let me go. Is that asking too much? and is it agreed to that effect?"

"Agreed. Yes, truly, if you perform it," said Caverley, who thought himself dreaming. Then turning towards his lieutenant: "Here is one who rates himself dear," he said, "we will see how he pays his value."

Agénor looked at the prince.

"Sire de Mauléon," said this latter, "in acknowledgment of the good office which you have rendered me, and the gratitude I owe for it, let us, according to the brotherly custom of knights, exchange our horses and our swords; perhaps you will lose by the change, but I will compensate you afterwards."

Agénor returned thanks. Caverley, who had heard, began to laugh.

"He is robbing you again," he whispered to the young man. "I have seen his horse, it is not so good as yours. Decidedly he is neither knight, merchant, nor Jew; he is an Arab."

The prince quietly sat down to a table, and made a sign to Musaron to draw up a second engagement resembling the first, then when drawn up, Agénor, who had given his surety for the prince, put his cross to it, as he had done with his own; then after Captain Caverley had examined it with his customary care, the knight left for Chalons, which could be perceived on the other side of the Saône. Everything turned out as the prince had stated. Agénor found in the saddle the little leathern bag, and in the bag the diamonds. He sold to the value of twelve thousand crowns, for the prince, entirely despoiled by Caverley, needed to replenish his purse; then, while returning to the camp, he discovered the Spanish captain whom Don Henry had pointed out to him, related to him what had befallen the prince, and caused him and his followers to accompany him as far as a little wood at about a quarter of a league's distance from the camp; there the Spaniards stopped and Agénor went on. Matters were arranged with better faith than the knight had hoped for. Caverley counted and recounted his golden crowns, heaving great sighs, for it then occurred to him, that a man who paid with such promptitude, would have paid him twice as much had he only asked for it.

However it was necessary to decide; and as the knight had strictly adhered to his word, to do honour to his own.

Caverley therefore allowed the two young men to depart, but not without reminding Agénor that his debt was not discharged, and that he owed a thousand livres of Tournay, and his services during an entire campaign.

"I hope that you will never return to those bandits," said the prince, as soon as they were free.

"Alas!" said Agénor, "there is no help for it."

"I will pay all that is necessary to buy you off."

"You cannot buy off my word, prince," replied Agénor, "and my word is given."

"Thank God!" said the prince, "I have not given mine, and I will have Caverley hung as sure as we were born. I shall thus have no regret for his profiting by my golden crowns."

At that moment they arrived near the little wood, where the Spanish captain with his twenty lances lay in ambush, and Henry, delighted at so easy a delivery, found himself again with his friends.

Such was the end of the scrape into which the prince and knight fell together, and whence the knight's word of honour delivered the prince.

On his part, Agénor, who had started without money or friends, now found a treasure almost at his disposal, and a prince his protector.

Musaron made a thousand dissertations on the subject, the one more ingenious than the other; but these dissertations, wholly of a philosophical character, are too much known from antiquity downwards, to need repetition here.

However, he ended these dissertations by a question too important to be passed over in silence.

"My lord," he said, "I cannot well understand how, having twenty lances at your disposal, you should have journeyed only with one squire and three servants."

"My dear sir," said the prince, with a laugh, "it is because the king, Don Pedro, my brother, has sent spies and assassins on all the roads leading from Spain to France. Too brilliant a retinue would have caused me to be recognised, and I wished to remain incognito. Darkness suits me better than broad day. Besides I wish it to be said: Henry left Spain with three servants, and returned with an entire army. Don Pedro, on the contrary, had a whole army in Spain, and left it alone."

"Brothers!" muttered Agénor, "brothers!"

"My brother has killed my brother," resumed Henry, of Transtamara, "and I will avenge my brother."

"Sir," said Musaron, availing himself of a moment when the prince was conversing with his lieutenant, "there is a pretext which Don Henry, of Transtamara, would not resign for another ten thousand crowns."

"How like he is to that valiant grand master! Did you remark it, Musaron?"

"Sir," said the squire, "Don Frederick was fair and this one is red; the grand master's eye was black, and his is grey; one had an aquiline nose, the other has a vulture's beak; the first was slender, the second is thin; Don Frederick had fire on his cheeks, Don Henry, of Transtamara, has blood: it is not Don Frederick that he resembles, but rather Don Pedro. Two vultures, Sir Agénor, two vultures."

"'Tis true," thought Mauléon; "and they fight over the body of the dove."

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON DELIVERED TO KING CHARLES V. THE RING OF HIS SISTER-IN-LAW, QUEEN BLANCHE OF CASTILE

IN the garden of a palatial edifice reared in the Rue Saint Paul, but still incomplete in many of its parts, walked a man from twenty-five to twenty-six years of age. He was clad in a long dark-coloured gown doubled with black velvet, and girdled at the waist by a cord, of which the tassels reached his feet. At variance with the custom of his time, he bore neither sword nor dagger, nor any distinctive mark of nobility. His only ornament of price was a small circlet of golden fleurs-de-lis, encompassing one of those black velvet caps which preceded the fashion of hoods. This man had all the signs of a pure Frankish descent: he had fair hair cut straight as a sign of high birth; blue eyes, and a chesnut-coloured beard; his face, though indicating the age we mentioned, bore not the imprint of passion; its grave and reflective character announced the man of deep thought and prolonged meditation. From time to time he stopped, allowing his head to fall on his breast, and his hands to hang down, which two large greyhounds going by his side, pausing or proceeding as he did, forthwith began to lick.

At some distance from this man, a young page of careless mien, lant against a tree, bearing a hooded falcon on his wrist, and playing with the bird of prey, which its golden bells showed to be a favourite.

In the more remote parts of the garden might be heard the joyous carollings of the birds which

were taking possession of the new royal domicile, for that pensive-looking man was no other than King Charles V., who had governed France as Regent, while his father, King John, the slave of his plighted word, had remained a prisoner in England. This studious monarch (who of all our kings has alone deserved to be termed the Wise by posterity) not finding sufficient seclusion and quiet in the Château of the Louvre, or the Palace of the Cité, was building this fine new hôtel* to replace them.

In the alleys were seen passing and repassing the numerous servants of this sumptuous mansion, and over the impatient cries of the falcon, the distant warbling of the birds, or the words interchanged by the servants as they passed each other, was heard at intervals, like the sound of thunder, the roaring of the great lions which King John had brought from Africa, and which were shut up in deep excavations.

King Charles V. followed one alley of this garden, turning as often as he reached a certain point, so that he might not lose sight of the gate of the hôtel, which, by a flight of six steps without, led to the terrace at which the alley terminated.

At times he stopped, fixing his eyes on the gate by which he seemed to expect somebody, and although that person appeared eagerly expected, yet without his face marking the least impatience at each deferred anticipation, he resumed his promenade at the same step, and with the same pensive serenity.

At last a man dressed in black, holding an ebony writing desk and parchments, appeared at the top of the steps. He cast a glance over the garden into which he was about to descend, and perceiving the king, went straight to him.

"Ah! 'tis you, doctor," said Charles, making some steps to meet him, "I was expecting you; do you come from the Louvre?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well, has any messenger returned from my embassies?"

"No one; only two knights, who appear to have made a long journey, have just arrived, and asked the honour of being presented to your highness, to whom they had matters they said of the first importance to communicate."

"What have you done?"

"I have brought them with me, and they await the king's good pleasure in one of the halls of the hôtel."

"And no news from his holiness, Pope Urban V.?"

"No, sire."

"No news from Duguesclin, whom I sent to him?"

"Not yet; but we cannot fail to receive them soon, since he sent word to your highness ten days ago, that on the following morning he would leave Avignon."

For an instant the king remained pensive and almost perplexed; then, as if taking a resolution,

"Well, doctor," said he, "let us see the dispatches."

And the king, trembling as if every new letter had to tell him some new misfortune, sat down under a bower, where the warm rays of the autumn sun pierced through the encompassing honey-suckles.

The doctor opened a portfolio which he held

under his arm, and drew out several bulky letters. He opened one at hazard.

"Well!" said the king.

"A message from Normandy," replied the doctor; "the English have burnt one town and two villages."

"Notwithstanding the peace," murmured the king; "notwithstanding the treaty of Bretigny, which costs us so dear!"

"What will you do, sire?"

"I will send some money," said the king.

"A message from the Forez."

"Go on," said the king.

"The great companies have descended on the banks of the Saône. They have sacked three towns, cut down the crops, torn up the vines, and carried off the cattle. They have sold one hundred women."

The king hid his face in his hands.

"But is not Jacques de Bourbon in that quarter?" said he; "he had promised to rid me of all these robbers!"

"Wait," said the doctor, opening a third dispatch.

"Here is a letter relating to him. He encountered the great companies at Brignais, gave battle; but——"

The doctor hesitated.

"But," resumed the king, taking the letter from his hands, "let us see what it is?"

"Read yourself, sire."

"Defeated and killed!" murmured the king; "a prince of the house of France butchered by these banditti! And our holy father sends me no reply. Yet the distance from Avignon is not so great."

"What are your orders, sire?" asked the doctor.

"Nothing. What would you that I order in Duguesclin's absence? And amongst all this, has no messenger come from my brother the King of Hungary?"

"No, sire," timidly replied the doctor, who saw the load of calamities pressing with accumulated weight on the unhappy king.

"And Brittany?"

"The war still continues; the Count de Montfort has had successes."

Charles V. raised to Heaven a look less of despair than of meditation.

"Great God!" he murmured, "wilt thou thus abandon the kingdom of France. My father was a good but too warlike a king; I, my God, have lived piously; I have always sought to spare the blood of thy creatures, looking on those over whom you have placed me as men of whom I was to render you an account, and not as slaves whose blood might flow at my caprice. And yet no one has borne good will to me on account of my humanity, not even thou, oh! my God. I wish to rear a dyke against this barbarism which is making the world fall back on chaos. The intention I am sure is good; well, no one helps, no one understands me."

And the king allowed his thoughtful head to fall on his hand.

At that moment was heard a loud flourish of trumpets, and acclamations resounding through the streets, made their way even to the ears of the absorbed king. The page ceased to meddle with his falcon, and questioned the doctor by a look.

"Go and see what it is," said the doctor. "Sire," added he, turning towards the king, "do you hear those flourishes?"

"I speak to Heaven of peace and philosophy," said the king; "they reply war and violence."

"Sire," said the page, running up, "it is Messire

* It is probably superfluous to observe that hôtel in French is used to designate public edifices and noble residences, as in Hôtel de Ville, Hôtel Rambouille, &c.



Bertrand Duguesclin who has returned from Avignon and is entering the town."

"Let him be welcome then," said the king to himself, "though he comes with more noise than I would wish."

And he rose with rapidity to go and meet him; but before he had reached the end of the alley, a great crowd of people appeared under the archway and streamed through the garden gate: they were the populace, the guards and the knights transported with joy, and surrounding a man of average height, with a large head, broad shoulders, and legs curved outwards by the constant habit of the saddle.

This man was Messire Bertrand Duguesclin, who, with his vulgar but mild countenance and intelligent eye, smiled and thanked people, guards, and knights, while they heaped their blessings upon him.

At that moment the king appeared at the end of the alley; all bowed, and Bertrand Duguesclin quickly descended the steps to do homage to his king.

"They kneel to me," muttered Charles, "but they smile on Duguesclin: I am respected, but he is loved. It is because he is the image of that false glory so powerful over all vulgar minds, and that I am the representative of peace; that is, in their short-sighted eyes of shame and submission. These people belong to their age—it is I who am not of mine; and more easily might I lay them in the tomb, than impose on them a change which is neither in their tastes nor in their habits. Yet, if God give me strength, I will persevere."

Then fixing his calm and benevolent look on the warrior who was before him, with one knee on the ground—

"Welcome," said he, aloud, extending his hand

with a grace which went out from his person, like a natural perfume.

Duguesclin applied his lips to that august hand.

"My good sovereign," said the knight, rising up, "here I am. I have made good speed, as you see, and I am the bearer of news."

"Good?" asked the king.

"Yes, sire, very good. I have raised **three** thousand lances."

The people shouted with joy at hearing that this reinforcement was arriving under the conduct of so brave a general.

"That is well," replied Charles, not wishing to thwart the delight which Duguesclin's words had excited in the admiring assembly.

Then, in a lower tone:

"Alas! we needed not to raise three thousand lances, messire, but rather to dismiss six thousand. We shall always have soldiers enough when we know how to use them."

And taking the arm of the good knight, quite marvelling at the honour, he mounted the steps, went through that crowd of people, courtiers, guards, knights, and women, who seeing the good understanding which prevailed between the king, and the general on whom all rested their hopes, cried "Noël" loud enough to make the roof shake.

Charles V. saluted everybody with smiles and a wave of the hand, and conducted the Breton knight into a great gallery intended to serve as a hall of audience, and which was contiguous to his own apartment. The shouts of the crowd followed them there, and were still heard when the king had shut the door behind him.

"Sire," said Bertrand, quite delighted, "with the aid of heaven, and the love of those worthy people, you would recover all your heritage, and I am certain that in two years of a properly conducted war——"

"But to make war, Bertrand, money is needed, much money, and we have none left."

"Pshaw, sire," said Bertrand, "with a little tax on the country lands——"

"There is no more country, my friend: the English have ravaged everywhere, and our good allies, the great companies, have succeeded in devouring what the English had spared."

"Sire, levy a tax of one franc a-head on each member of the clergy, and take a tithe of their goods; it is long enough since Churchmen have levied that tithe on us and ours."

"It is on that very matter that I sent you to our holy father, Pope Urbain V.," said the king; "does he grant us the authority to levy that tithe?"

"Oh! quite otherwise," replied Bertrand, "for he complains of the poverty of the clergy, and asks for money."

"You see well, my friend," said the king, with a sad smile, "that nothing is to be done in that quarter."

"Yes, sire; but he grants you a great favour."

"Every favour which costs dear, Bertrand, is no longer a favour for a king with empty coffers."

"Sire, he grants it free of expense."

"Then, say quickly, Bertrand, what is the favour in question?"

"Sire, the great companies are at present the scourge of France, are they not?"

"Yes, certainly; has the Pope found a means to get rid of them?"

"No sire, that is beyond his power; but he has excommunicated them."

"Ah! that will make an end of us!" cried the

king in despair, while Bertrand, who had announced the news with an air of triumph, knew not what to make of it; "from thieves they will become murderers, from wolves, tigers; perhaps there were some among the number who still feared God, and those held the others in check. At present they will have nothing further to fear, and they will spare nothing. We are lost, my poor Bertrand."

The worthy knight knew the profound wisdom and subtle intellect of the king. Having that quality which in a man of second-rate intellect is so valuable—deference for the judgment of one superior to himself, he began to reflect, and his good natural sense showed him that the king had conjectured rightly.

"It is true," said he, "they will have a hearty laugh, when they learn that our holy father, the Pope, has treated them like Christians; and they will treat us all the more like Jews and Mahometans."

"You see now, my dear Bertrand," said the king, "the unhappy position in which we now are."

"In truth," said the knight, "I had not thought of that; and I believed that I was bringing you good news. Do you wish me to return to the Pope and tell him not to hurry himself?"

"Thank you, Bertrand," said the king.

"Excuse me, sire," said Bertrand; "I am a bad ambassador, I must confess. My business is to mount on horseback and charge, whenever you say 'mount on horseback, Duguesclin, and charge.' But in all such questions as are disputed with strokes of the pen, instead of being disputed with strokes of the sword, I must allow, I am but a bad politician."

"And yet," said the king, "if, my dear Bertrand, you were willing to help me, nothing would be yet lost."

"How if I were willing to help you, sire!" exclaimed Duguesclin; "but certainly I am willing! Arm, sword, and body, I am entirely at your disposal."

"It is because you will not be able to understand me," said the king with a sigh.

"Ah! that sire, is very possible," answered the knight, "for my head's rather thick, which by-the-bye, is rather lucky for me in other respects, as it has had so many hard blows to bear, that it would have been very much damaged had nature made it otherwise."

"I was wrong in saying that you could not comprehend me, my dear Bertrand; I ought to have said that you would not."

"That I would not!" replied Bertrand, quite astonished. "And how should I do otherwise than wish what my king wills?"

"Eh! my dear Bertrand, because we only wish in general those things which pertain to our nature, our inclinations, and our habits; and what I am about to ask you will seem, in the first instance, singular and even strange."

"Say on, sire," resumed Duguesclin.

"Bertrand," resumed the king, "you know our history, do you not?"

"Not much, sire," answered Duguesclin; "that of Brittany a little, because 'tis my native country."

"But at least you have heard speak of all those great defeats which, on many occasions, have placed the kingdom of France on the brink of ruin?"

"Oh! as to that, yes, sire. Your highness doubtless speaks of the battle of Courtray;* for

* The battle of Courtray was fought the 11th July, 1302.

instance, where the Count d'Artois was killed; of the battle of Cressy, where the king, Philippe de Valois, was the seventh to leave the field; and lastly, of the battle of Poitiers, where King John was made prisoner?"

"Well, Bertrand," asked the king, "have you ever reflected on the causes which produced the loss of those battles?"

"No, sire: I reflect as little as possible; it tires me."

"Yes, that I can understand; but for my part I have reflected as to the cause, and I have found it."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and I will tell it you."

"I listen, sire."

"Have you remarked that as soon as the French are in order of battle, instead of keeping behind a rampart of pikes, like the Flemings, or of stakes, like the English, and taking advantage of an opportune moment, they charge pell-mell, without caring for the ground, each man having the same idea—that of getting the first at the enemy, and striking the most decisive blow himself. Thence arises an absence of unity, for none obey any will but their own, follow any law but their own caprice, heed any voice but that which cries

The force on the side of the Flemings, consisted of 20,000 men. These were not disciplined troops, but weavers of Bruges and Ypres, who, finding the exactions and oppression of the French intolerable, flung away the shuttle for the pike, or rather the iron-shod stave which formed their principal weapon. There were a few noblemen and knights who fought on foot with the rest.

The French army consisted of 7,500 horsemen, 10,000 archers, 30,000 foot soldiers, the last being furnished by the French communes or municipalities, then as servile and spiritless as those of Flanders were independent and brave. The French gendarmerie charged headlong on the Flemings without reconnoitring the ground; they came on one of those low cut canals or rather ditches which then as now everywhere intersected Flanders, and rolled over man and horse, the pressure of the rear of the column preventing the head from getting clear. The Flemings closed on their flanks, and the result was the total defeat of the French, with the loss of about 6,000 men, principally men-at-arms.

The battle of Cressy is so well known in the military annals of England, that it would be most superfluous to refer to it otherwise than most briefly. It occurred 26th August, 1346. The English army was on that occasion somewhat more than 20,000 men, of whom not more than two-thirds were brought to action. The French numbered upwards of 80,000 men. Yet we find them totally routed, leaving 11 princes, 80 bannerets, 1,200 knights, and 30,000 soldiers on the field of battle.

The battle of Poitiers is undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary that occurs in the history of any nation. The English army under Edward, the Black Prince, numbered but 2,000 men-at-arms, 4,000 archers, and 2,000 light armed foot soldiers; the French were 50,000 strong, and mostly men-at-arms. At the view of this fearful disparity of numbers, Edward consented to treat for a free passage, and consented to render up all the strong places he had captured in his march from Guienne into Poitou; but this was refused, unless he would further consent to surrender himself and 100 of his knights prisoners. The result was he determined on resistance. The battle took place the 19th September, 1356. The first onset of the French advanced guard being unsuccessful, two whole divisions of their army, commanded, one by the Duke of Orleans, the other by the Dauphin Charles, and his brother, the Duke of Anjou, galloped off the field without striking a blow. The division which remained, headed by John in person, was still superior in force to the whole English army. But it was wholly discomfited. The king, 13 counts, an archbishop, 70 barons and bannerets, and 2,000 men-at-arms were made prisoners.

It is impossible to peruse the history of France at that period without being convinced that relatively to their neighbours, and especially the English, their military character was by no means so high as at a later period of their history. But their character in this, (as in other respects,) even in the most brilliant periods of their annals, has always been liable to great fluctuation, according to the flow of good fortune, and the capacity of their commanders.

—TRANSLATOR.

'en avant.' Whence it happens that the Flemings and the English, people of steady habits, observant of discipline, and obedient to the voice of one leader, strike at the right time, and almost always defeat us."

"'Tis true," said Duguesclin, "'tis just so that matters pass; but how can you prevent the French rushing forward, when they see the enemy in front?"

"'Tis what we must come to, however, my good Duguesclin," said Charles.

"It might, perhaps, be possible," said the knight, "were the king to put himself at our head. Perhaps his voice would then be listened to."

"You are mistaken, my dear Bertrand," said Charles; "I am known to be of a pacific nature, quite differing in that respect from my father John, and my brother Philip. If I did not march straight on the enemy, it would be ascribed to fear; for the kings of France have been accustomed to march on the enemy wherever he was to be found; it is, therefore, acknowledged courage, achieved renown, a name without a stain, which alone can perform such a miracle!—it is Bertrand Duguesclin, if he think fit!"

"I, sire!" exclaimed the knight, opening his eyes with astonishment at the king.

"Yes, you, and you alone; for, God be thanked, it is known that you love danger, and if you were to avoid encountering it, no one would suppose it was from fear."

"Sire, what you have said is well, as far as I am concerned; but who could make all your nobles and knights obey me?"

"Yourself, Bertrand."

"I! sire," said the knight, shaking his head; "I am a very small person to give orders to all your nobility, of whom more than half are more noble than myself."

"Bertrand, if you wished to help me, if you wished to serve me, if you wished to understand me, I could with a word make you greater than any of those people."

"You, sire?"

"Yes, I," replied Charles V.

"And what then would you do?"

"I would make you constable of France."

Bertrand began to laugh.

"Your highness is mocking me," he said.

"Not so, Bertrand," said the king; "I speak seriously."

"But, sire, the blade stamped with the fleur-de-lis, has never yet glittered but in hands akin to royalty."

"And that is one of our national misfortunes," said Charles; "for the princes who receive that sword, receive it as an appanage of their rank, and not as a reward for their services; holding that sword on account of their birth, rather than from the grant of their king, they neglect the duties attached to it; while, on the other hand, you, Duguesclin, every time that you draw it from the sheath, you will think of the king who gave it you, and of the counsels by which he accompanied the gift."

"The fact is, sire, that if ever I obtained such an honour—but no, it is impossible."

"How, impossible?"

"Yes, yes, it could only do disservice to your highness. And I should not be obeyed, because my rank was not sufficiently high."

"Only obey me," replied Charles, assuming an expression of resolute will, "and I will take care that you shall be obeyed by others."

Duguesclin shook his head doubtfully

"Listen, Duguesclin," continued Charles; "do you think that our being too brave is the only reason for our being beaten?"

"Faith," answered Duguesclin, "I hadn't thought of that; but now I think on it, I believe my opinion is that of your highness."

"Well, in that case, my good Bertrand, all will go well. We must not endeavour to beat the English, but only to drive them out. For that purpose, no battles, Duguesclin, no more battles; combats, encounters, skirmishes, that is all. We must destroy our enemies, one by one, at the skirts of forests, at the passage of rivers, or when they are loitering in villages; it will take a long time, I know; but it will be surer in the end."

"Eh! I know all that is true, but your nobility will never consent to make war in that manner."

"By all the saints in heaven! they must consent, when there are two men who will the same thing, and that those two men are the king, Charles V., and the constable, Duguesclin."

"Then the constable Duguesclin must needs possess the same power as the king, Charles V."

"You shall have the same, Bertrand; I will grant to you the power I possess over life and death."

"As regards the common people, I understand; but as regards the gentry?"

"Over the gentry, also."

"Reflect, sire, there are princes in the army."

"Over princes, gentry; in short, over all. Listen, Duguesclin. I have three brothers, the Dukes of Anjou, Burgundy, and Berry. Well, I make them not your lieutenants, but your soldiers; they shall yield the same obedience as do all the other nobles, and if one of them fail, you will make him kneel on the very spot, you will send for the executioner, and you will strike off his head, as that of a traitor."

Duguesclin looked at the king with surprise. He had never before heard that mild and good prince speak with so much firmness. The king confirmed by his look what he had just spoken.

"Well, sire," said Duguesclin, "since you place such means at my disposal, I will obey your highness, and try what I can do."

"Yes, my good Duguesclin," said the king, placing his hands on the knight's shoulders, "yes, you will try, and you will even succeed; and I, in the meantime, will take care of the finances—I will get money accumulated in our state coffers. I will complete the erection of my castle of the Bastille, I will raise up the walls of Paris, or rather construct a new enceinte. I will found a library, for it is not enough to nourish men's bodies, their minds also must be fed. We are barbarians, Duguesclin, who only think of cleansing the rust from our cuirasses without heeding that of our understandings. Those Moors, whom we despise, are our masters; they have poets, historians, legislators, while we are wholly without."

"'Tis true, sire," said Duguesclin, "but it seems to me that we can do without them."

"Yes, as England does without the sun, because she cannot do otherwise;* but it does not follow that fog is worth pure air; if God, however, grant me life, and you, Duguesclin, good courage, we two will give France all it wants; and that we may give it all it wants, we must, in the first instance, give it peace."

"And, above all," said Duguesclin, "that we should find means to rid it of the great companions which only a miracle can enable us to effect."

"Well! that miracle God will perform," said the king. "We are both too good Christians, and have too good intentions for his help to be wanting."

At that moment the doctor ventured to open the door.

"Sire," said he, "your highness forgets the two knights."

"Ah! that's true," said the king; "but you see it was because Duguesclin and myself were busily engaged in making France the first country in the world. Now let them come in."

The two knights were immediately introduced. The king went forward to meet them. Only one had his visor open. The king did not know him. The smile with which he greeted him was not, however, the less gracious on that account.

"You have asked to speak with me, sir knight, and it has been added, on business of importance."

"'Tis true, sire," replied the young man.

"Welcome, then," said Charles.

"Do not be too ready to bid me welcome, sire," said the knight, "for it is sad news of which I am the bearer."

A melancholy smile passed over the king's lips. "Sad news!" he said; "it is long since I have received any of a different complexion. But we are not of those who confound the messenger with his message. Speak on then, sir knight."

"Alas! sire."

"From what country do you come?"

"From Spain."

"It is long since we have ceased to expect anything good from that quarter; you will, therefore, not cause us surprise by whatever you may have to say."

"Sire, the King of Castile has had the sister of our queen put to death."

Charles made a gesture of horror. The knight went on:

"He has had her assassinated, after having dishonoured her by calumny."

"Killed! my sister killed!" said the king, growing pale; "it is impossible."

The knight who had knelt down, rose up abruptly.

"Sire," said he, in a trembling voice, "it ill becomes a king thus to insult a good gentleman who has suffered much that he might render service to his prince. Since you will not believe me, there is the queen's ring; perhaps you will believe that more readily."

Charles V. took the ring, considered it a long time, then by degrees his breast began to swell and his eyes to fill with tears.

"Alas! alas!" he said, "her ring it certainly is; it was I who gave it her. Well, Bertrand, do you hear this? This blow too!" he added, turning to Duguesclin.

"Sire," said the good knight, "you owe an expression of regret to this brave young man for the offensive word you addressed to him."

"Yes," said Charles; "yes, but he will pardon me, for I am overwhelmed with grief, and I would not believe it at first, and even yet I do not believe it." At that moment the second knight came forward and raising his visor, said—

"Will you believe me, if I tell you the same thing that he has done? Will you believe me, I who have learnt the exercises of chivalry near your person, I who am a child of the court of France, I whom you have loved so well?"

* This is a most unhappy simile; for the very gist of the preceding observation is the possibility of France doing otherwise in the matter of literature and science, if the effort were made.

"My son, my son Henry!" exclaimed Charles. "Henry of Transtamara! Oh! amidst all my misfortunes, you come to revisit me—I thank you."

"I came, sire," replied the prince, "that I may join with you in weeping the cruel death of the Queen of Castile. I came to place myself in safety under your buckler, for if Don Pedro has killed your sister Donna Blanche, he has also killed my brother Don Frederick."

Bertrand Duguesclin grew flushed with rage, and the fire of exterminating wrath glittered in his eyes.

"A wicked prince," he exclaimed, "and were I King of France——"

"Well, what would you do?" said Charles, turning rapidly towards him.

"Sire," said Henry, still on his knee, "protect me, sire; save me."

"I will make the endeavour," said Charles V., "but how does it happen that you, a Spaniard, coming from Spain, you who are so deeply interested in all this affair, have allowed yourself to remain unknown, while this knight was addressing me, and have been silent while he was speaking?"

"Because, sire," replied Henry, "this knight whom I recommend to you as one of the most noble and honourable whom I know—because I say, this knight has performed a great service for me, and that it was natural for me to grant him the honour he deserved, by allowing him to speak the first. He has ransomed me from the hands of a leader of a company; he has been a faithful companion to me, and further, none could be more fit to speak to the King of France, than this knight, since he saw himself the Queen of Castile expire, and has touched the head of my unfortunate brother."

At these words, which Henry interrupted with sobs and tears, Charles appeared convulsed with grief, and Bertrand Duguesclin stamped his foot on the ground.

Henry, through the fingers of the gauntlet with which he concealed his eyes, observed attentively the effect which his words produced. That effect exceeded his hopes.

"Well," said the king, inflamed with rage, "this recital shall be repeated to my people, and may God punish me, if I do not unloose, in my turn, that demon of war, whom I have so long kept chained in his cavern. Yes, I may die in the cause, I may fall on the corpse of my last servant, France may be swallowed up in the gulf, but my sister shall be avenged."

But in proportion as Charles V. became more animated, Bertrand became more thoughtful.

"A king, like Don Pedro, dishonours the throne of Castile," said Henry.

"Marshal," said Charles V. addressing Bertrand, "it is now that your three thousand lances will be found useful."

"It was for France that I levied them," said Duguesclin, "and not to pass the mountains. That will give us too much of war at one time. What your highness said just now has made me reflect: while we are campaigning in Spain, sire, the English will re-enter France, and will effect a junction with the great companies."

"Then we shall fall under the shock," said the king. "God no doubt wills it so, and there the destinies of the kingdom will find their limit. But it will be known why Charles, the king, has allowed his fortune to perish. The people will perish; but at least they will have died for a cause much more weighty and more just than

what relates to the possession of a piece of ground or a quarrel with an ambassador."

"Ah!" said Bertrand, "if you had but money, sire."

"I have it!" said the king, in an under tone, and as if he feared being heard from without the apartment. "But money will not restore life to my sister and brother."

"No, sire," said Duguesclin; "but we will avenge them, and that without stripping France of its defenders."

"Explain yourself," said Charles.

"Certainly," said Bertrand. "With money, we would enrol the captains of some companies. They are devils who care little for whom they fight, provided only their fighting brings them money."

"And I," said Mauléon, timidly, "if your highness would permit me to put in a word."

"Listen to him, sire," said Henry; "maugre his youth, he is as judicious as he is brave and trustworthy."

"Say on," said Charles.

"I think I have understood, sire, that these companies are onerous to you."

"They devastate the kingdom, sir knight; they ruin my subjects."

"Well!" said Mauléon, "perhaps as Messire Duguesclin has said, there may be a way to deliver you from them."

"Oh! speak, speak," said the king.

"Sire, all these bands are at this moment gathered on the banks of the Saône. Hungry ravens who no longer find prey in a country ruined by war, they will rush to the first bait which is offered them. Let Messire Duguesclin, that flower of chivalry, who is known and respected even by the least among them, go towards them, put himself at their head, and lead them into Castile, where there is so much to burn and plunder, and on the faith of that great captain, you will see them raise their banner and leave to the last man on this new crusade."

"But if I go," said Bertrand, "is there no danger that they may keep me, and make me pay a ransom? I am but a poor knight of Brittany?"

"Yes," said Charles; "but you have kings for friends."

"And I," said Mauléon, "will humbly offer to introduce you to the most formidable of the number, to the sire Hugh de Caverley."

"Who, then, are you?" asked Bertrand.

"Nobody, messire, or, at least, but a small sort of person; but I have fallen into the hands of those bandits, and have taught them to respect my word, for it was on my word they let me go free; and as soon as I leave your highness, it will be to bear them a thousand livres of Tournay, which I owe them, and of which the Prince Henry has generously made me a gift, and to engage myself during a year in their company."

"You among those bandits!" said Duguesclin.

"Messire," said Mauléon, "I have pledged my word, and only on that condition would they allow me to go out of their hands; besides, when commanded by you, they will no longer be bandits, but soldiers."

"And you think they will leave?" said the king, enlivened by hope; "you think they will quit France? you think they will consent to abandon the kingdom?"

"Sire," replied Mauléon, "I am sure of what I state, and that will furnish you with 25,000 soldiers."

"And I will lead them so far," said Duguesclin,

"that not one shall return to France; that I swear to you, my good king; they want war, well war they shall have."

"That is what I wished to say," resumed Mauléon; "and Messire Bertrand has completed my thought."

"But who then are you?" asked the king, looking at the young man with astonishment.

"Sire," replied Agénor, "I am merely a knight of Bigorre in the service as I have said, of one of the companies."

"Since how long?" asked the king.

"Since four days, sire."

"And how did you enter it?"

"Tell the circumstances, sir knight," said Henry; "you can only gain by the narration."

And Mauléon related to the king, Charles V. and the constable, Duguesclin, the history of his engagements with Caverley, in such wise as to raise the highest admiration in the king, who well knew what judgment was, and the marshal, who well knew what was chivalry.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW THE BASTARD OF MAULEON RETURNED TO THE CAPTAIN, HUGH DE CAVERLEY, AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

CHARLES V. was too wise a prince and had meditated too frequently on the affairs of his kingdom not to see at once all the results which might be obtained from the situation, if events were arranged in the manner which Mauléon had undertaken to prepare. The English, deprived of the assistance of the great companies,* those scourges with which they beat the country, would be necessarily forced to pay troops to replace those who paid themselves, and made, on their own account, a lucrative war, and one ruinous to the kingdom. The result, then, would necessarily be, a truce for France, a truce during which new institutions might restore some repose to the French, and which would permit the king to execute the great undertakings which he had begun for the embellishment of Paris and the improvement of the finances.

As to this Spanish war, Duguesclin did not consider it as attended with inconvenience. The French chivalry was superior in force and conduct to all other chivalry in the world. The Castilians therefore would be beaten; besides Bertrand had no intention of sparing the companies, knowing that the more dearly he bought the victory, the more advantageous would that victory be to France, and that the more carcasses he strewed on

the plains of Spain, the fewer plunderers he would bring back into his country.*

The policy of that time was entirely selfish, or, at least, entirely personal; the idea had not then arisen of putting forward those principles of international right which have since simplified the questions of war among kings. Every prince armed on his own behalf and from his own resources, by persuasion, force and money, and in virtue of his arms he possessed a right which many were ready to make valid.

Charles said to himself, "Don Pedro has killed his brother, and murdered my sister, but he would have been right to do so, if I do not so arrange matters as to let him see he is wrong."

Don Henry, of Transtamara, said—

"I am the elder brother, since I was born in 1333, and my brother, Don Pedro, in 1336. Alphonso, my father, was betrothed to my mother, Leonora de Guzman; therefore, although he did not marry her, she was really his lawful wife. Chance alone made me a bastard. But as if this excellent reason were not enough, heaven sends me private injuries and public crimes to avenge. Don Pedro wished to dishonour my wife; he is the assassin of my brother, Don Frederick; finally, he has killed the King of France's sister. I am, therefore, right in wishing to dethrone Don Pedro seeing that if I succeed, I shall, in all probability mount the throne in his stead."

Don Pedro said to himself—

"King *de facto* and born in lawful wedlock. I married in virtue of a treaty, which procured me the alliance of France, a young princess of royal blood, named Blanche of Bourbon; instead of loving me, as was her duty, she loved Don Frederick, my brother; and as if it were not enough for me to have been constrained to a political alliance, my wife took part with my brothers, Tello and Henry, who were making war against me, which is a crime of high treason; further, she brought dishonour on my name with my brother, Don Frederick; I have put Don Frederick and her to death, and I had the right to do so."

Only when he cast his eyes around him to see whether his right would receive a solid support, he could see only Castilians, Moors, and Jews, while Don Henry, of Transtamara, had with him Arragon, France, and the Pope. It was not an equal match, so that Don Pedro, one of the most intelligent princes of his epoch, sometimes whispered to himself, that though he had begun by being in the right, he might end by being in the wrong.

Preparations were quickly made at the court of France. King Charles lost no farther time than was necessary to commit the sword of constable of France into the hands of Bertrand Duguesclin, and to make a discourse to the princes and nobility, in which, after announcing the honour he had conferred on the Breton gentleman, he invited them to obey the new constable, as they would himself. Then as it was of all things necessary to obtain the co-operation of the great companies for the ensuing campaign, before any rumour of the intention could get abroad, lest Don Pedro should purchase not the succour of the captains in Spain, but their sojourn in France—a sojourn which would necessarily prevent Charles V. from carrying his arms elsewhere, the king dispatched the constable and the Chevalier de Mauléon, who was to introduce him, on their mission.

Prince Henry, of Transtamara, assured of King

* I subjoin a few extracts from Sismondi on this subject:—The two treaties of Brittany and of Navarre had only augmented the number of the companies. Sometimes they endeavoured to penetrate into Anquitaine, but the Prince of Wales repulsed them with so much vigour, that they hastened to return to the central provinces of France, which they termed their room (*leur chambre*.) These provinces had not the same military spirit as those of the north, or as Brittany and Gascony. They had furnished few soldiers to the armies, they furnished few to the companies of adventurers, among whom were seen, on the contrary, a great number of English, Gascons, Bretons, Normans, Picards, and Germans. From their composition the French were disposed to believe that they were the armies of Edward still engaged in an underhand warfare against France, and the brigand leaders did all they could to accredit an opinion which gave them safety. By turns the historians of the monarchy have represented the adventurers of the companies as English, when they wished to make a grievance against England of their ravages in France, and as French, when they wished to derive food for vanity from their victories in Spain.—*S de Sismondi. Histoire des Français. Part 5. c. x. vol. 7. p. 174 and p. 181.—Ed. Dumont, Brun. 1837.—TRANSLATOR*

* Truly a most infernal calculation.—TRANSLATOR.

Charles's support, followed them as a simple knight.

The journey was made without noise. The envoys were only escorted by their squires, then their servants, and a dozen men-at-arms.

Soon the Saône was perceived and the innumerable tents of the companies, who, leaving the extremities of France which they had devoured, had gradually drawn near the centre, as do hunters, when driving game before them; and who, like another horde of barbarians, expecting a new Aetius, had united their ensigns in those fertile plains.

Agénor took the lead, leaving the constable in safety in the strong castle of Rochepot, still belonging to King Charles; and without hesitating he went forward as soon as that precaution was taken, to throw himself into the companies still extended nets.

The leader among whose bands he fell was a captain almost as well known as Messire Hugh de Caverley, and who was called the Green Knight. It was his turn that day to command the advanced guard. Agénor was taken before him, and as Agénor had no mind to pay two ransoms, he appealed to Messire Hugh de Caverley, under whose tent he was introduced by the Green Knight in person.

The formidable chief of adventurers uttered a cry of satisfaction, when he perceived his former prisoner, or rather his future associate.

Before any explanation Agénor made Musaron come forward and draw from a leathern bag which, thanks to the munificence of Prince Henry and King Charles V., was suitably lined, one thousand livres of Tournay, which he disposed on the table.

All the time that this was going on, no one breathed a word.

"Ah! that is a fine trait," said Messire Hugh de Caverley, when the last pile of money had been reared near the nine others. "I did not expect, I must confess, to see you again so soon. You are then already used to the idea which at first frightened you so much of living among us."

"Yes, captain, for a true soldier can live everywhere, and everywhere live as he pleases. And, besides, I have thought that good news can never come too soon, and I bring you news so extraordinary that I am sure you are far from expecting it."

"Bah!" said Caverley, who by this beginning began to suspect that Mauléon was holding out some snare in order to get free from his word; "Bah! an extraordinary piece of news, do you say?"

"Sir captain," resumed Mauléon, "I spoke of you the other day to the King of France, to whom as you know I was deputed by his dying sister, and I mentioned to him the graceful courtesy which you had shown towards me."

"Ah! ah!" said Caverley, much flattered, "the King of France knows me then."

"Certainly, captain; for you have ravaged his kingdom enough to make him remember you; the cries of the monks who have been burnt, the lamentations of the women who have been violated, the complaints of the burghers whom you have ransacked, have made your name resound triumphantly in his ears."

Caverley shook with pride and pleasure under his black armour: there was something sinister* in the joy of that iron statue.

"Thus," said he, "the king knows me; thus

Charles V. knows the name of Captain Hugh de Caverley."

"He knows it," and will not forget it—that I can answer for."

"And what did he say concerning me?"

"The king said to me: 'Sir knight, go and find the good Captain Hugh, or rather—' added he—

The captain appeared to hang on Mauléon's lips, "'or rather,' continued the knight, 'I will send him one of the highest of my servants.'"

"One of the highest of his servants?"

"Yes."

"A nobleman, I hope?"

"Forsooth!"

"Known."

"Oh! well known."

"The King of France does me much honour," said Caverley, resuming his bantering tone. "But he wants something then from me, this good King Charles, the fifth of the name."

"He wishes to enrich you, captain."

"Young man! young man!" exclaimed the adventurer, with a sudden distance of manner, "do not jest with me, for it is a joke which has cost dear to all those who have attempted it. The King of France may be pleased to wish for something of mine—my head, for instance; I don't think he would be displeased to get it. But however skilfully he may set about it, sir knight, it really gives me great pain to tell you that he won't get hold of it, by your means, as yet."

"See what comes from always doing evil," gravely answered Mauléon, whose noble countenance almost made the bandit feel respect; "one becomes distrustful of everybody, one accuses all the world, and one even goes so far as to calumniate a king who has earned the title of the most honest man in his kingdom. I begin to think, captain," he added, shaking his head, "that the king did wrong in deputing me to you: it is an honour which princes exchange with each other, and at this moment you speak not like a prince, but like a bandit chieftain."

"Ah!" said Caverley, somewhat disconcerted by the audacity of this remark, "to be mistrustful, my dear friend, is to be wise. And to speak frankly, how can the king wish well to me, after the cries of those burnt monks, the lamentations of those violated women, and the complaints of those plundered citizens of whom you just now so eloquently discoursed?"

"Very well," said Mauléon, "and I see what remains for me to do."

"And what remains for you to do, let us see?" asked Captain Hugh de Caverley.

"What remains to be done, is for me to send word to the royal ambassador that his mission is at an end, as a chief of adventurers mistrusts the word of King Charles V."

And Mauléon went towards the outlet of the tent to put his threat in execution.

"Ho! ho!" said Caverley, "I did not say a word of what you think, neither did I think a word of what you say. Besides, there will always be time enough to send away that knight; on the contrary, my dear friend, make him come here and he shall be welcome."

Mauléon shook his head.

"The King of France mistrusts you, messire," he coldly said; "and he will not allow one of his principal servants to enter your camp, unless you give him a sufficient guarantee."

"By the Pope's spleen," howled Caverley, "you insult me, comrade!"

"Not so, my dear captain," resumed Mauléon;

* Démoniacal would be a more appropriate term.—TRANSLATOR.

"for it was you who first set the example of mistrust."

"Eh! zounds! is not it well known that a king's envoy is inviolable everywhere, and even among us who do violence to many things? This one then must be of a particular species?"

"Perhaps so," said Mauléon.

"Then, from curiosity, I should like to see him."

"In that case, sign a safe conduct in the proper form."

"That's easily done."

"Yes, but you are not alone here, captain; and I came to you specially, because you are the first among all, and because I had had the advantage of relations with you, and not with the others."

"Then the message is not for me alone?" asked Caverley.

"No; it is for all the chiefs of companies."

"It is not me alone, then, that this good King Charles wishes to enrich?" said Caverley in a bantering tone.

"King Charles is powerful enough to enrich, if it pleased him, all the plunderers in his kingdom," replied Mauléon, with a laugh which in irony left far behind it the laugh of Captain Caverley.

It appeared that this was the way to speak to the chief of the adventurers, for this sally put his bad temper quite to flight.

"Let my clerk come here," he said, "and let him draw me out a safe conduct in the proper form."

A tall, thin, trembling man, dressed in black, came forward; he was the schoolmaster of a neighbouring village, whom Captain Hugh de Caverley had raised *ad interim* to the dignity of secretary.

He drew up, under Musaron's inspection, the most precise and regular safe conduct which any doctor ever drew with pen on parchment. Then the captain having caused each of the illustrious bandits, his fellow-comrades, to be summoned by a page, began himself by stamping the pommel of his dagger below the writing (whether from not knowing how to write, or from being unwilling from special reasons to take off his gauntlet), and then below his monogram caused the other chiefs to affix, some their cross, others their seal, others finally their signature; and while all this was going on, these chiefs joked together, thinking themselves much superior to all the princes of the earth, since they gave safe conduct to the ambassadors of the King of France.

When all the seals and signatures had been appended to the parchment, Caverley turned towards Mauléon.

"And the name of the messenger," he asked.

"You will learn it when he comes, and then if he deign to tell it you," said Agénor.

"It is some baron," the Green Knight cried out with a laugh, "whose castle we have burnt and whose wife we have carried off, and who comes to see whether he cannot succeed in getting back his chaste spouse in exchange for his horse or his falcons."

"Prepare your best armour," said Mauléon, proudly; "order your pages, if you have such, to put on their richest clothes, and preserve silence when he whom I announce comes in, unless you wish to repent at a later period, the commission of a very serious fault for men skilled in the career of arms."

And Mauléon left the tent with the air of a man who knew the strength of the blow he was about to strike. A murmur of doubt and surprise ran through the group.

"He is mad," muttered some of the number.

"Oh! you don't know him," said Caverley. "No, no, he is not mad, and we have something new to look for."

Half a day passed over. The camp had re-assumed its usual aspect. Some were bathing in the river, others drank under the trees, others rolled on the grass. Bands of pillagers were seen returning heralded by cries of exultation and distress; then appeared women with dishevelled hair, and men dragged at horses' tails and covered with bruises. Cattle struggling with their unknown masters were dragged bellowing under the tents and killed and cut up on the instant for the evening's meal, while the chiefs came to see the results of the forage and chose their part of the booty, not without serious contention between the drunken or hungry soldiers.

Further off new recruits were seen at exercise, peasants dragged from their huts and enrolled by force, who in three or four years time would forget everything, to become, like their new companions, men of plunder and blood. Armies of lacqueys, clouds of hangers-on were playing or preparing their masters' meals. Casks driven in, stolen beds, broken furniture, unripped mattresses strewed the ground, while enormous dogs, without masters, and collected in bodies, prowled among all these groups to get food, plundered the plunderers, and made the straggling children cry as they passed by them.

It was at the entrance of this camp which we have endeavoured to depict, but of which the aspect alone could give an idea, that suddenly resounded the clamorous flourishes of four trumpets, preceded by the white banner, with innumerable *fleur-de-lis* which were at that epoch, still the arms of France. A great movement took place forthwith in the camp. The drums beat, the sub officers ran to collect stragglers and to place guards at the principal posts. Soon, through a close hedge of curious and surprised faces, defiled a slow and solemn cortège. First came the four trumpeters whose flourishes had given the alert to the camp, then a herald-at-arms, bearing naked and erect the sword of constable of France, with its blade inlaid with *fleurs-de-lis*, and golden hilt; then (preceding a few paces, twelve men, or rather, twelve iron statues), a knight of haughty bearing, with his visor down. His powerful black horse champed a golden bit, and a long war sword, its handle polished by use, glittered by his side. Near this knight, but somewhat in the rear, came Mauléon. He guided the troops to the tent of the chiefs, where the council was then assembled.

The silence of astonishment and expectation reigned over that camp which an instant before resounded with noisy clamours.

He who appeared to be the chief of the troop, alighted, caused the royal banner to be reared up amid the sound of trumpets, and entered the tent.

The chiefs who were seated did not rise at his entry, but looked at each other with smiles.

"This is the King of France's banner," said the knight, with a mild and penetrating voice, making it an obeisance.

"We recognise it well," said Messire Hugh de Caverley, rising up, to reply to the stranger; "but we wait till the King of France's envoy has given his name, before we bow to him as he has bowed to the arms of his master."

"I," replied the knight, with modesty, raising the visor of his helmet, "am Bertrand Duguesclin, constable of France, deputed by the good king, Charles V. to messeigneurs, the chiefs of the great



companies, to whom may God grant all joy and prosperity."

He had scarcely finished, when all heads were uncovered, the swords of all unsheathed and exultingly brandished; respect or rather enthusiasm was everywhere shown by prolonged cheering, and this electric fire spreading with the rapidity of a train of gunpowder and inflaming the camp, the whole army clashed their pikes and swords together, crying with one voice—

"Noel, Noel, hail to the good constable."

Duguesclin bowed with his usual humility, and saluted in the midst of a thunder of applause.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE CHIEFS OF THE GREAT COMPANIES PROMISED MESSIRE BERTRAND DUGUESCLIN TO FOLLOW HIM TO THE END OF THE WORLD, IF HIS GOOD PLEASURE WERE TO LEAD THEM THERE.

THAT first moment of enthusiasm soon yielded to so earnest an attention that the constable's words, although pronounced with the calmness of strength, penetrated the ranks of the crowd, and arrived clear and distinct at the extremities of the camp, when the meanest soldiers gathered them with eagerness.

"Seigneurs capitaines," said Bertrand with that almost obsequious politeness which gained him the hearts of all who came into communication with him, "the King of France sends me to you, that I may accomplish with your aid the only action which is, perhaps, worthy of such brave men-at-arms as you are."

The exordium was complimentary, but the general character of mind among the captains of the great companies was one of distrust; hence it happened that ignorance of the end to which the constable was tending cooled the enthusiasm of his hearers; he saw that it was necessary to proceed, and profiting by the sentiment he had first inspired, thus continued:

"Each of you possesses glory sufficient not to wish for more; but not one is sufficiently wealthy to say 'I think myself rich enough.' Besides, each of you must have arrived at that point at which one desires to unite the honour of arms with the profit which ought to follow. Wherefore, worthy captains, consider what would be an expedition directed by you against a rich and powerful prince, whose spoils falling into your hands, by lawful right of war, would be trophies as glorious as they were profitable. For my part, I also am an adventurer, like yourselves. I am a soldier of fortune, like yourselves. Are you not weary, gentlemen, as I am, of the oppression which we have exercised together on enemies weaker than ourselves? Do you not desire to hear, instead of the wailings of women and children, which I heard just now in passing through your camp, the flourishes of the trumpet proclaiming actual battle, and the shouts of an enemy, whom you must fight with, before you can subdue? Finally, you, brave knights of all nations, having consequently each the honour of your several countries to sustain, would you not be happy, besides the glory and riches which I promised you, to unite in a cause which does honour to humanity? For, after all, what kind of life is it that we men-at-arms lead? No prince anointed by God gives us authority for our rapine and our extortions. The blood which we spill must often call vengeance upon us, and not only does its voice mount to heaven, but, despite of ourselves, it moves our hearts, all hardened as they are by the horrors of war; if, after a life spent according to our caprice and humour, we end by becoming the soldiers of a great king; by becoming the champions of God; lastly, by becoming rich and powerful, shall we not have carried out the true destiny of every man who devotes himself to the arduous pursuit of chivalry?"

This time, a prolonged murmur of approbation ran through the ranks of the captains, for the voice of the hardest breaker of lances, of the sternest jousting of the time, had great power over them. All had seen Bertrand at work on the day of battle and many had felt the edge of his sword, or the weight of his mace-at-arms; they, therefore, thought it became them to follow the opinion of such a soldier.

"Gentlemen," continued Duguesclin, pleased with the effect which the first part of his discourse had produced, "this is the plan of which our good king, Charles V., has entrusted the execution to me. The Moors and Saracens have returned to Spain, more cruel and insolent than ever. A prince reigns in Castile more insolent and more cruel than either Saracens or Moors; a man who has killed his brother: a knight installed according to the rules of chivalry, and bearing the chain and spurs of gold; who has assassinated his wife,

the sister of our king, Charles; an audacious culprit, finally, who seems as if by this crime he would brave the efforts of all the chivalry of the world; for ere such a crime can remain unpunished, knighthood must have come to an end."

This second period appeared to make but a moderate impression on the adventurers. To kill one's brother, to assassinate a woman, appeared to them actions of a somewhat irregular kind, but not crimes, in order to avenge which, it was necessary to disturb twenty-five thousand honest fellows. Duguesclin perceived that his cause had lost ground, but he did not become discouraged, and resumed his discourse:

"Reflect, gentlemen, whether any crusade has ever appeared more glorious, or, above all, more useful. You know Spain: some of you have travelled through it: all have heard speak of it. Spain, the country of silver mines: Spain, where the Moors and Saracens have buried the treasures which they have plundered half the world to supply, Spain: where the women are so lovely: that for a woman Don Rodrigo lost his kingdom. Well! 'tis there that I will lead you, gentlemen, if you are only willing to follow; for it is there I am going with some of my good friends, picked from among the best lances of France; 'tis there that I am going to learn whether the king, Don Pedro's knights are so cowardly as their master, and to know if the edge of their swords is worth the temper of our axes. It is a fine journey to make; gentlemen captains, will you be of the party?"

The constable terminated his discourse by one of those frank and decisive gestures which so generally carry with them deliberative assemblies. Hugh de Caverley, who during the harangue had appeared as agitated as if inspired by the very demon of battle, went through the circle, asking each his opinion, and soon others coming up to him delivered also theirs; he then returned to Bertrand Duguesclin, who, leaning on his long sword and devoured by the eyes of all the soldiers quietly conversed with Agénor, and with Henry of Transtamara. The heart of this last beat violently from the commencement of the scene for its result to him, unknown as he was to the crowd, was the alternative between a throne or obscurity; that is, between life and death. A man of that stamp has his ambition in the place of a heart, and every wound it receives is mortal.

The deliberation scarcely took a few minutes; for Hugh de Caverley approaching the constable, amid profound silence, said:—

"Honoured Seigneur Bertrand Duguesclin, fair sire, knight and comrade, you who are at this day the mirror of all chivalry, know that on account of your valour and your good faith, we hold ourselves ready to serve you. You shall be our chief and not our associate, our leader and not our equal. In every case and in every encounter we are at your disposal, and we will follow you even to the end of the world. Be they Moors, be they Saracens, be they Spaniards, only say the word and we will march against them. Only, there are among us many English knights, and those love King Edward III. and his son the Prince of Wales; those two princes excepted, they are willing to fight against all comers. Does that suit you, fair sir?"

The constable bowed with all the marks of profound gratitude, and added a few words to acknowledge the honour conferred upon him by the suffrages of such warriors, and in thus expressing himself, Bertrand spoke what he felt. To the man of the fourteenth century whose whole life

was that of a soldier, such homage was necessarily flattering.

The news of this determination excited throughout the camp an enthusiasm impossible to describe. In fact, it was a wearisome life for those adventurers, that continual skirmishing against villages, that war of hedges and ravines, that famine in the midst of opulence, that desolation amidst triumph. To live in another country, a country still new to them, on an almost virgin soil, under a milder heaven, to get a change of wines and women, to conquer the rich spoils of Spaniards, Moors, and Saracens, was a dream which might well follow the reality of having for a leader the mirror of European chivalry, as the constable was termed by Messire Hugh de Caverley. Therefore Bertrand Duguesclin was received with the wildest exultation, and passed to the tent which had been prepared for him in the most lofty and conspicuous position in the camp, under an arch formed by the lances, which the adventurers, bowing not to the banner of France, but to the man who bore it, crossed over his head.

"My lord," said Bertrand to Henry de Trans-tamara, when they had returned under their tents, and while Hugh de Caverley and the Green Knight were congratulating Agénor on his return, and especially on the circumstances which had accompanied it: "my lord, you should be satisfied; the hardest part of the task is accomplished. We may all be well pleased. These fellows, like flies, at first for blood, will light on the skin of Moors, Saracens, and Spaniards, and sting them outrageously; while they are serving their own purposes, they will also forward yours; while they enrich themselves, they will give you a crown. I count on the fevers of Andalusia, on mountain ambuscades, on the passage of rivers whose rapid current carries away horses and their riders, on the enervating abuse of wine and love, of drunkenness, and pleasure, to prostrate half these banditti. As to the other half, it will fall I hope under the blows of the Saracens, Moors, and Spaniards, good hammers for such anvils. We shall therefore be conquerors in every way. I will instal you on the throne of Castile, and I will return to France to the great satisfaction of good King Charles, at the head of my men-at-arms, whom I shall keep in reserve, while I sacrifice these illustrious scoundrels."

"Yes, messire," replied Henry de Trans-tamara, who was plunged in thought, "but do you not apprehend some unforeseen resolution of the king, Don Pedro? He is a skilful leader, and his mind is full of expedients."

"I do not see so far, my lord," replied Duguesclin; "the more trouble, the more glory; and further, the more Caverleys and Green Knights will be left on the fair plains of Castile. One thing alone gives me concern—it is what relates to our entry into Spain; for though it may be very well to make war on the king, Don Pedro, on his Saracens, and on his Moors, it will not do to carry it on against the whole of Spain united; five hundred companies would not suffice, and it is much more difficult to provide for the subsistence of an army in Spain than in France."

"I intend, therefore," said Henry, "to go on in advance to forewarn the King of Arragon who is my friend, and who, from love to me and hatred to the king, Don Pedro, will grant you a free passage through his states, with provisions and succours of men and money; so that if by chance we were discomfited in Castile we should have a safe retreat to fall back on."

"One may see, my lord," resumed the constable,

"that you have been reared and brought up near the good King Charles, who makes all who surround him sagacious. Your counsel is eminently prudent; go, therefore, but take heed that you be not taken; the war would then be at once at an end, for if I am not mistaken, we are fighting to make and unmake a king, and not on other grounds."

"Ah! messire," replied Henry, annoyed by the penetration of a man whom he had regarded as a mere fighter without any acuteness, "if Don Pedro were once dethroned, would you not be happy to replace him by some faithful friend of France?"

"My lord," answered Duguesclin, the king, Don Pedro, believe me, would be a faithful ally of France, if France would only be somewhat a friend to Don Pedro. But the discussion does not turn on that point, and the question has been resolved in your favour. That murderous misbeliever, that Christian king, who is a disgrace to Christendom, must be punished, and you as well as another may serve to work out the justice of God. Wherefore, my lord, and since all has been agreed on and settled between us, depart quickly, for I am eager to be in Spain with the companies before Don Pedro has had time to unloose the strings of his purse."

Henry made no reply. He felt himself humiliated at the bottom of his heart by having to receive protection on the part of a mere knight, under pain of failing in his royal enterprise. But the crown which he saw shining in his ambitious dreams of the future consoled him for the temporary humiliation.

Therefore, while Bertrand was accompanying to Paris the chief leaders of companies that he might present them to King Charles, while that prince, overwhelming them with honours and bounty, put them in a disposition to brave death cheerfully in his service, Henry, followed by Agénor, who was himself followed by his faithful Muaron, took the road to return to Spain, avoiding, however, that by which they had come, lest they should be recognized by any who, in spite of the safe conducts with which Captain Hugh de Caverley and Messire Bertrand Duguesclin had provided them, should cause them any annoyance.

They directed their course to the right, which was the shortest road, that they might first gain the Béarn, and thence enter Arragon. Consequently, they skirted the confines of Auvergne, followed the banks of the Vézère, and passed the Dordogne at Castillon.

Henry, nearly certain of avoiding recognition under the name and appearance of an obscure knight, wished to obtain personal assurance of the dispositions entertained towards him by the English, and try if it were possible to procure the Prince of Wales's support to his party. This result appeared the less impossible from the eagerness which the captains had shown to follow Bertrand Duguesclin—an eagerness which evinced that the Black Prince had not as yet taken any decision. To have for an auxiliary the son of Edward III., the boy who had gained his spurs at Cressy, the young man who had defeated King John at Poitiers, was not only to double the moral strength of his cause, but further to bring five or six thousand lances more into Castile, for the Prince of Wales had such forces at his command, without weakening his garrisons in Guienne.

The prince held his camp, or rather his court, at Bordeaux. As there was then truce, if not peace, with France, the two knights entered the town without difficulty; it is true that it was the

evening of a feast day, and that the tumult prevented any attention being paid them.

Agénor had at first proposed to the prince, Don Henry of Transtamara, to lodge with him at his guardian's, Messire Ernauton de St. Colombe, who had a house in the town; but the fear lest his companion should not keep his secret sufficiently close, made the prince refuse the offer. It was even agreed that for greater security's sake, Mauléon should pass through Bordeaux without seeing his guardian, which he promised, although it went much against him to pass so near the worthy protector who had acted as a father towards him, without giving him a greeting. After, however, going through all quarters of the town, after having knocked at the door of every inn, and acknowledged that the crowd of visitors made it impossible to procure a lodging in any hostelry, the prince was obliged to return to the offer which Agénor had made him. They went on, therefore, to the residence of Messire Ernauton, situated in one of the suburbs of the town, but not until after a solemn agreement had been concluded between the travellers that the prince's name should not be mentioned, and that he should pass as a simple knight, Agénor's friend and brother-in-arms.

Chance, however, served the travellers well. Messire Ernauton de St. Colombe was then travelling in the neighbourhood of Mauléon, where he had a castle and some land. Only two or three servants were remaining at Bordeaux, and they greeted the young knight as if he had been not the old knight's ward, but his son.

A confidential servant, who had known Agénor from his birth, did the honours of the house to the travellers. It had much changed during the four years which had elapsed since Agénor's last visit to Bordeaux. Its gardens, which were very spacious, and which afforded a retreat impervious to the sun's rays and to the eyes of man, were now separated from the dwelling by a large wall, and appeared to belong to a separate residence.

Agénor questioned the old servant on the subject, and learnt that those gardens, under whose spreading umbrage he had passed his careless youth, had been sold by his guardian to the Prince of Wales, who had erected within them a splendid mansion wherein he lodged all those guests whom he was unable or unwilling to receive publicly in his palace. Courtiers from all countries, messengers from all kings, were then, however, flocking around the victorious son of Edward III.

The prince made a sign to Agénor to repeat to him this explanation, with all its details; for it will be remembered, he had come to Bordeaux, with the intention of seeing the Black Prince, and the hope of making him his friend. But as it was getting late, as the day had been a hard one, and the travellers were weary, the prince ordered his servants to get his bed ready, and went there immediately after supper. Agénor did the same, and entered his own, which being on the first story, looked into those beautiful gardens, where he proposed to delight himself by gathering, like the flowers of the past, the happy memories of youth.

Instead of going to bed, he sat down near the window, and with all the poetical feeling of twenty, his eyes fixed on those fine trees through which the moon's rays scarcely pierced, he began to remount that river of life, of which the borders are always more flowery as they draw nearer to childhood. The heaven was serene, the air was mild and calm, the river glittered afar off like the silvery scales of an immense serpent; when by a

caprice of imagination, whether resulting from the resemblance of the landscape, whether from the return of the same hour or from the perfume of the orange trees of Guienne, recalling those of Portugal and Andalusia, his thoughts darted on wings of flame across the mountains, and alighted at the feet of that Sierra d'Estrella, on the borders of that little river which throws itself into the Tagus, and on the bank of which, allured by the sounds of the guzla, he had first spoken of love to the beautiful Moresca.

Suddenly, amid this nocturnal inebriation, a light coming from the mysterious palace glittered like a star through the foliage; then, oh! strange occurrence, which the knight at first took for an error of his senses, he thought he heard the sounds of a guzla. He listened tremblingly to those chords which were only a prelude, but soon a pure and melodious voice, which, when once heard, one was not permitted to forget, sang, in Castilian, this old Spanish romance.

"Upon a steed of generous race,
A cavalier of Spain,
While swiftly he pursued the chace,
Of dogs and falcon lost the trace,
And sought them both in vain.

Under an oak of branches vast,
He sat at close of day,
Listening to sounds that murmured past,
Now loud as armour's clanging brast
Now soft as amorous lay.

When on the leafy summit's height,
'Neath which he lay reclined,
A fair infanta met his sight,
With syren eyes and tresses bright
Like chains around her twined.

'Sir knight,' she said, in dulcet tone,
'Oh! fear not her who sings,
She, though deserted and alone.
In this strange nest with moss overgrown,
Springs from a race of kings.

My mother, dame of lineage high,
Of Castile wears the crown,
When closed their life of royalty,
My ancestors right solemnly
In marble pomp lay down.

But here I was condemned to stay,
'Mid leaves to find my home,
Till fifteen years had flown away,
And morning's sun beholds the day,
Which leaves me free to roam.

Wherefore, as to the saints above,
Oh! gentle sir, I sue
On bended knee, if that may move,
That as your wife, or as your love,
You bear me hence with you.'

Agénor listened no further; he bounded as if to awake from his dream, and plunged his eager look amid the plantain trees of the garden, as he murmured with feverish hope,—

"Aïssa! Aïssa!"

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW AGENOR FOUND HER WHOM HE WAS SEEKING,
AND PRINCE HENRY HIM WHOM HE WAS NOT
LOOKING FOR.

AGENOR once assured that it was Aïssa's voice that he had heard, yielding to a first impulse, as was very natural in a young man twenty years of age, took his sword, wrapped himself in his mantle, and prepared to enter the garden. But at the moment he had put his leg over the window-sill, he felt a hand placed on his shoulder, he turned round, 'twas his squire.

"Sir," said this last, "I have always remarked that some of the follies of this world are committed

by passing through doors, but that the remainder and much the greater part are committed by passing through windows."

Agénor made a movement to get on. Musaron held him fast with a respectful violence.

"Let me go," said the young man.

"Master," said Musaron, "I only ask you for five minutes. In five minutes time, you shall be free to commit any folly that comes into your head."

"Do you know where I am going?" asked Mauléon.

"I can guess."

"Do you know who is in that garden?"

"The Moresca."

"Aïssa herself—you have said it. Now, do you still hope to detain me?"

"That is, according as you are reasonable or out of your senses."

"What do you mean?"

"That the Moresca is not alone."

"No; doubtless she is with her father, who never leaves her."

"And her father is always guarded himself by a dozen Moors."

"Well, what then?"

"What then? why there they are prowling under those trees. You will run against one of them, you will kill him. Another will come to the cries of the first, you will kill him too. But a third, a fourth, a fifth will come up; there will be a conflict, a fight, a clashing of swords; you will be recognised, taken, and perhaps killed."

"May be! but I shall see her."

"Fie, fie! a Moorish woman!"

"I am resolved to see her again."

"I do not prevent your seeing her again, but see her without risk."

"Have you any means?"

"I have none, but the prince will procure them."

"How, the prince?"

"Certainly. Do you think he is less interested than you are in Mothril's presence at Bordeaux, or that he will not have as much desire, when he knows it, to learn what the father is doing here, as you have to look after the daughter?"

"You are right," said Agénor.

"Ah! see now," said Musaron, quite gratified.

"Well! go and acquaint the prince. I will remain here, that I may not lose that faint light."

"And you will have the patience to wait for us?"

"I will listen," said Agénor.

The sweet voice continued to resound through the night, still accompanied by the vibrations of the guzla. It was no longer the garden of Bordeaux which Agénor had under his eyes, it was the garden of the Alcazar; no longer the white mansion of the Prince of Wales, but the Moorish kiosque with its curtain of verdure. Each note of the guzla made a deeper impression on his heart, which gradually swelled to intoxication. He had almost ceased to believe himself alone, when the door opened, and he saw Musaron come in followed by the prince, wrapped like him in his mantle and bearing his sword in his hand.

A few words made the prince fully acquainted with the situation, as Agénor related to him, without reserve, his former relations with the beautiful Moresca and the furious jealousy of Mothril.

"You must, therefore," said the prince, "endeavour to speak with that woman; we shall learn more through her, than through all the spies in the world. A woman held in slavery, often holds dominion over her despot."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Mauléon, burning with impatience to meet Aïssa; "and here am I ready to obey your highness's orders."

"You are sure you heard her?"

"I heard her as clearly as I hear you, my lord. Her voice came from that quarter; it still vibrates in my ear and would guide me amid the darkness of hell."

"Very well! but the difficulty is for us to penetrate into that house, without falling into the midst of some troop of armed men."

"You have said 'for us,' my lord?"

"Without doubt; I will accompany you, holding myself however of course in the background, that I may allow you to converse freely with your mistress."

"Then, nothing further need be feared, my lord. Two champions like you and I, would stand against ten Christians or twenty Moors."

"Yes, but we should cause an alarm, we should slay, and, forced to fly on the morrow, we should have sacrificed to a vain bravado the success of an important enterprise. Let us therefore be prudent, sir knight; see your mistress again, but with all necessary precautions. Above all, take care not to lose your dagger in the apartment of a jealous father or husband. Dropping mine in the chamber of Don Guttiere cost me the woman whom I most loved."

"Yes, prudence, prudence!" muttered Musaron.

"Yes, but with too much prudence we shall lose her perhaps," answered Agénor.

"Be at your ease," said Henry. "On the faith of a prince she shall be my first confiscation on the Moors, when I mount on the throne of Castile. But in the meantime, let us take care that the throne do not escape us."

"I wait the orders of your highness," said Mauléon, with difficulty repressing his impatience.

"Tis well," said Henry. "I see you are a well-drilled soldier, and things will only turn out better by your obedience to my commands. We are captains, and must know how to recognise the weak sides of a post. Let us go down to the garden, examine the walls, and when we have found a spot suitable for escalade, we will clamber over."

"My lord," said Musaron, "it is not scaling the walls which offers any difficulty, for I have seen a ladder in the court. All parts of the wall will therefore be equally favourable. But behind the wall are Moors with scymitars and forests of pikes. My master knows I am brave, but where the lives of so illustrious a prince and so illustrious a knight are concerned—"

"Speak for the prince," said Agénor.

"This good squire pleases me," said Henry; "he is prudent, and will make a most useful rear guard."

Then raising his voice:

"Perajo," he continued, addressing his squire, who was waiting behind the door, "are you armed?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the attendant addressed.

"Then follow us."

Musaron saw that no objection would be listened so. All that he gained was that they went out of the door and walked down the staircase, instead of leaping from the window. As he always did, when a decision was once taken, he went gravely to the purpose. There was a ladder in the court; he applied it to the wall. The prince wished to go over first; Agénor followed, then

Perajo, and lastly, Musaron, who drew the ladder after him to the inner side of the wall.

"Keep that ladder," said the prince, "for the manner in which you have spoken has made me place every confidence in you."

Musaron sat down on the last step of the ladder: Perajo was placed twenty paces further in ambuscade in a fig-tree, and Henry and Agénor continued to advance under the great shadows of the trees which concealed them from any who might be in the light.

Soon they came so close to the house, that instead of the sounds of the guzla, which had ceased, they could now hear the sighs of the musician.

"Prince," said Agénor, "who could no longer master his impatience, "await for me under that bower of honeysuckle; before ten minutes have elapsed, I shall have spoken to the Moresca, and I shall know what her father is doing at Bordeaux. If I am attacked, do not compromise your safety, but regain the ladder. I will warn you by a single cry—"to the wall!"

"If you are attacked," said Henry, "remember, sir knight, that no one, perhaps, with the exception of my brother, Don Pedro, and my master, Messire Duguesclin, can wield his sword as I can. I shall then show you, sir knight, that my boast is not a vain one."

Agénor thanked the prince, who disappeared in the shade, where the knight's eyes vainly sought him. As to Agénor, he continued his journey towards the house; but there was between it and the wood an empty space to traverse, lighted by the moon. Agénor hesitated an instant before thus braving the light. However, he was about to risk this passage, when, by a side-door of the house which opened with a jar, three men came out conversing in a low tone of voice. The one who was about to pass nearest to Agénor (who remained ensconced, motionless, and mute, under the shadow of a plantain tree), was Mothril, whom his white burnous* made it easy to recognise; the one in the middle was a knight clad in black armour; lastly, the one who was about to pass nearest to Don Henry, was a nobleman wearing a rich Castilian costume under a mantle of purple.

"My lord," said this last, with a laugh, to the black knight, "you must not be offended with Mothril for refusing to show you his daughter this evening. He has scarcely consented to let me see her, although during nearly six weeks we have travelled day and night together."

The black knight replied; but Agénor did not take heed to what he said. What he wished to know, and what he now knew, was, that Aïssa was alone. She had arisen at the sound of the paternal voice, and, as curious as any Christian, had leant out of the window to follow with her eyes the three mysterious promenaders.

The knight sprung forth from the clump of trees, and in two bounds got below the window, which was twenty feet from the ground.

"Aïssa," he said, "do you recognise me?"

Though usually self-possessed, the young girl drew back, with a little involuntary exclamation. But recognising almost immediately him who constantly dwelt in her thoughts, she extended her arms to him, saying:

"Is it thou, Agénor?"

"Yes, 'tis I, my love; but how shall I reach you, after having, by such a miracle, once

more lighted on you? Have you not a silken ladder?"

"No," said Aïssa; "but to-morrow I will have one. My father will pass the night at the prince's palace. Come to-morrow; but to-night be on your guard, for they are in the neighbourhood."

"Who are they?" asked Agénor.

"My father, the Black Prince, and the king."

"What king?"

"The king, Don Pedro."

Agénor thought of Henry, who might perhaps soon find himself face to face with his brother.

"Until we meet to-morrow," said he, darting under the trees, where he soon disappeared.

Agénor was only half in error. The three walkers had taken the direction where Henry remained hidden. The prince first recognised Mothril.

"My lord," he was saying, when his voice first reached the prince's ear, "your highness is wrong in so constantly reverting to Aïssa. The noble son of the King of England, the glorious Prince of Wales, did not enter this house to see a poor African damsel, but to decide with you on the destiny of a powerful kingdom."

Henry, who had stooped forward, to hear better, now drew backwards.

"The Prince of Wales!" he muttered, with unspeakable surprise, looking with curiosity at that black armour which had become so famous in Europe, through the bloody battles of Cressy and Poitiers.

"To-morrow," said the prince, "I will receive you at the palace, and on that day, before we part, all I hope will be arranged, and then the affair may be made public. To-day I was bound to comply with the wishes of my royal host, and not awake the curiosity of the courtiers. Farther, before I could conclude anything, it was needful that I should know accurately the intentions of his highness the King Don Pedro of Castile."

At these words, the Black Prince courteously bowed to the wearer of the purple cloak.

The perspiration rose to Henry's forehead; but his agitation became still greater, when a voice he well knew, uttered the following words:

"I am not the King of Castile, my lord, but a suppliant forced to seek assistance far from the kingdom, for my most bitter enemies are in my own family: I had three brothers one aimed at my honour, the others at my life. The one who wished to dishonour me, I have slain; Henry and Tello remain; Tello has remained in Arragon to raise an army against me; Henry is in France near the person of King Charles, and flatters him with the hope of conquering my kingdom, so that France, exhausted by your victories, may find in Castile new strength to contend with you. I have therefore thought, my lord, that it would be your policy to support the just rights of a legitimate monarch by continuing in his country, and with the resources of men and money which he offers, the war which this hypocritical rupture of the peace allows you to wage against France. I wait your highness's reply to know whether I must despair of my cause."

"Certainly not; your highness must not despair; for, as you have said, your cause is a rightful one. But almost* viceroy of Guienne, I have been unwilling to bear the sole charge of my vice-royalty.

* I cannot see why the word "presque" almost is put into the mouth of the Black Prince, as he did actually fill that dignity. But Aquitaine was the term by which the possessions of Edward III. in the south of France, comprising both Guienne and Gascony, was then generally designated.

I have asked from my father a council composed of wise men, which assistance he has granted. I must consult that council, but be assured that if the opinion of the majority be mine, and yields to the inclination which I have to meet your wishes, no more faithful and, I dare to say, no more energetically will ever have fought under your banners. To-morrow, sire, when you return to the palace, my reply will be more explicit. Until then, do not let yourself be seen. Success depends above all on secrecy."

"Oh! be at your ease, no one here knows us."

"And this house is sure," said the prince, "and even so sure," he added with a smile, "as to calm the anxiety of the noble Mothril concerning his daughter."

The Moor muttered a few words which Henry did not hear, for already the three promenaders had got to some distance; besides, one single thought, burning, insane, and almost unconquerable, had got possession of him, since he had heard that hated voice. There, two steps from him, was his mortal foe, the spectre risen up between him and the goal he strove to reach: there, at the length of his sword, was the man who thirsted for his blood, and for whose blood he was thirsting; a single blow struck by his hand which hatred would have guided to the mark, would have ended the war and brought all doubt to an end. This idea made the prince's heart throb, and drew his arm towards his enemy. But Henry was not one of those men who yield to a first impulse, even though that impulse were one of mortal hatred.

"No, no," he said, "I should kill him, and that would be all. And it is not enough that I kill, I must also succeed him. The Prince of Wales would avenge the assassination of his guest, he would put me to an ignominious death, or shut me up in a perpetual prison. Yes," continued Henry, after a moment's pause, "but I might also escape, and then Tello," he added, smiling at his having forgotten one of his brothers, though that brother were his ally, "Tello whom I should find on the throne—all would have to be begun again."

This consideration stopped Henry's arm; his half-drawn sword returned to its sheath.

Certainly the spirits of darkness must have laughed at their infernal sister Ambition, which, for the first time, withdrew the hand of her votary from his poniard.

It was at that moment that, the three promenaders having got beyond hearing, Mothril uttered those words which the prince was unable to distinguish.

At the same instant, Agénor rejoined him; one was gloomy, the other beaming with joy; one had just forgotten war, intrigues, princes, the world; the other rubbed his mailed gauntlets together, thinking he already ground his enemies to dust, and held by the steps of the throne of Castile.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BLOODHOUND.

THE secret of Mothril's journey to Bordeaux was now explained, and Aïssa would have nothing further to tell the knight on that subject; but there remained matters of much more importance to them: those thousand loving avowals which always seem new to lovers, and which indeed to Agénor and Aïssa were so much the newer, from never having been made at leisure.

On the other hand, Prince Henry of Transtamara knew his brother's plans as well as if they had been communicated to him, and could foretell the reply which the Prince of Wales would make, as well as if he had assisted at the council which was to assemble on the morrow. Being well convinced that Don Pedro would obtain the support of the English, he had no other course to pursue than to leave Bordeaux before the alliance was ratified between them: for then, if recognised, he would be made a prisoner of war, and Don Pedro, to end the quarrel at once, might have recourse to those summary means, which schemes of ambition had alone prevented Henry from recurring to, against himself.

When the prince and the knight had conferred together, when the first had taken counsel from the prudence of the second, as to the course that it was fit to pursue; that is, when Agénor had advised Henry to leave as quickly as possible for Arragon, so as to be ready for the first companies which the constable would dispatch thither, the prince, in his turn, referred to the private affairs of his young companion.

"And your amours?" he said.

"My lord," replied Agénor, "I cannot dissemble that I think of them with bitter vexation. It was delightful to find at ten paces' distance, that happiness of which I had so long dreamed, and which I feared I might pursue all my life without overtaking, but—"

"Well," said the prince, "what change has taken place, and what prevents you who have neither a brother to contend with, nor a throne to conquer, from snatching that happiness as you pass by?"

"Are you then not about to leave, prince?" asked Agénor.

"I shall certainly leave," replied Henry; "for however warm may be the friendship which my heart feels for you, dear Agénor, it cannot, as you will be the first to understand, weigh in the balance against the prospects of a crown, and the interests of an entire nation. Were your existence at stake, then the case would be very different; for, to preserve that, I would sacrifice my fortunes and my ambition."

And the subtle glances of the prince dived into the clear and open look of the young Frenchman, to seek for gratitude.

"But," continued Henry "what I cannot sacrifice my crown for, is what you must permit me to call, my friend, your somewhat foolish passion for the daughter of the traitor Mothril."

"I know it well, my lord, and I should have been a madman, had I even hoped otherwise; therefore, poor Aïssa, adieu."

And from his window he began to look so sadly on the pavilion shaded by sycamores, that the prince began to smile.

"Happy lover," he muttered, while his forehead became obscured; "he lives for a sweet thought which perpetually blooms in his heart, and sheds perfume over his existence. Alas! I also have known that charming torture which makes all young and generous sentiments vibrate in the depths of the soul."

"You say that I am happy, my lord," exclaimed Agénor, "and Aïssa expected me to-morrow; I was to have seen Aïssa to-morrow, and I shall not see her; my lord, if the frustration of all the hopes of my heart, at the moment they were about to be fulfilled, may make one unhappy, then I am the most unhappy of men."

"You are right, Agénor," answered the prince;

"think therefore only of the present hour; you are greedy after no treasures, you pursue no crown, you ask only sweet words, require but a first kiss; the wealth you claim is a woman, your throne the flowery seat which she was to share with you to-morrow. Oh! do not lose that evening, Agénor, as it may be the most beautiful pearl which youth will leave in your memory."

"But then, my lord," said Agénor, "you will leave without me?"

"This very night. I wish to leave the English territory; it is necessary, as you may well understand, that I should be on neutral ground by to-morrow. I shall remain three or four days in Navarre, at Pampeluna. Come quickly to rejoin me there, Agénor, for I cannot wait for you longer."

"Oh! my prince," said Agénor, "can I leave you when you are menaced by danger? I do not think I can consent to that, even for all the treasures of love which await me, and which you promise."

"No exaggeration, Agénor; no danger threatens me on my departure this evening. Descend, therefore, the flowery slope. Perajo accompanies me, and you know he is a good swordsman; only rejoin me quickly."

"But, my lord——"

"And further listen. If you love that Moresca as much as you say——"

"My lord, I dare not tell you how much I love her, for I have scarcely seen her, and have barely exchanged two words with her."

"Two words are enough, if one has chosen them well, in our brave Castilian language. I say, then, that if you love this Moresca, you will have a double triumph, as you will snatch at once a daughter from Mothril, and a soul from hell."

These words were at once those of a king and of a friend. Agénor understood that Henry de Transtamara was already aiming to unite these two characters, and, not to fail in his own part, he knelt down before the prince, to whom all such considerations appeared so contemptible, that his thoughts had already wandered from them, and were floating far beyond the Pyrenees, amid the clouds which crowned the summit of the Sierra d'Araçéna.

It was then agreed on that the prince should take one or two hours' rest, and should then start for the frontier. As for Mauléon, now free, and finding his golden chain broken for the moment, he lived no longer on the earth, but floated in heaven.

The slumber of lovers is, if not deep, at least prolonged; for it is full of dreams which become linked one to the other, and which so much resemble happiness, that the sleeper has great trouble in awaking.

Therefore, when Agénor opened his eyes the sun was already high on the horizon. He called Musaron immediately, and learnt from him that the prince had mounted on horseback at four in the morning, and had ridden from Bordeaux with the rapidity of one who feels the danger of delay.

"Well," said he, when he had listened to the squire's recital, decked out with all those commentaries with which he thought proper to embellish it. "Well, Musaron, as regards ourselves, we shall stay at Bordeaux during this evening, and perhaps to-morrow, but during this time it is agreed that we shall not go out, and that we shall allow no one to see us. We shall be only the fresher at the moment of departure, which may happen from one instant to the other. As

to you, my friend, have good care for the horses, so that they may be able to overtake the prince, even if a double burden be laid upon them, and twice the pace required."

"Oh! oh!" said Musaron, who, as is already known, was on free terms with the young knight, above all when this last was in good humour, "we are no longer concerned with politics, it appears, and we pass to something else. If I were aware what we were about to do, I might perhaps be of assistance."

"You will learn that at midnight, Musaron; in the meantime remain quiet and concealed, and do what I tell you."

Musaron, always delighted with himself on account of the enormous confidence he had in his own resources, groomed his horses, made a double meal and waited for midnight, without once putting his nose to the window.

It was not thus with Agénor, who, with his eyes fixed near his lowered blinds, did not lose the opposite house from sight.

But, as we have said, Agénor had risen late, and as Musaron had imitated his master, having watched at night even later than Agénor, neither had observed in the garden belonging to the mansion opposite a man who, from the dawn of day, had, curved towards the earth, questioned with anxiety the traces of steps impressed on the fresh earth of the garden, and the torn and broken branches of the trees which grew so thickly round the dwelling of Aïssa.

This man, enveloped in a large mantle, was the Moor, Mothril, who, with the sagacity peculiar to his race, compared the different imprints, interpreted, followed them as a bloodhound follows a track from which nothing, not even momentary interruptions, can divert him.

"Yes," said the Moor, with glowing eye and dilated nostril, "yes, these are certainly my steps in this alley. I can recognise them by the form of my slippers. These by the side are those of the Prince of Wales; he wore iron boots, and his armour made his tread more heavy. These lastly are those of the king, Don Pedro. They are scarcely imprinted, for his tread is as light as that of an antelope. The prints of our footsteps always go together; but these - and these - I don't know them."

And Mothril went from the bower of honeysuckle to the clump of trees where Mauléon had remained so long hidden.

"Here," he muttered, "they are deep, impatient, and varied. Where did they come from? whither did they tend? to the house. Yes, here they are, and they come to the foot of the wall. There they are still more deeply hollowed. He who waited here must have risen on tiptoe, doubtless, to reach the balcony; Aïssa was his object, that is now certain. Now was Aïssa in understanding with him? That is what we must endeavour to find out."

And the Moor, leaning over this imprint, examined it with grave anxiety.

"This step is that of a man shod like a Frankish horseman. Here is the furrow traced by the spur; let us see where it comes from."

And Mothril re-pursued the track which brought him back to the honeysuckle bower where his investigations commenced.

"Another," he muttered, "has stopped there; another, for the step is not the same. This one, no doubt, came on our account, as the other on that of Aïssa. We must have passed so close to that one as almost to brush him, and he must have



heard us. What were we saying when we passed by here?"

And Mothril endeavoured to recall what his two companions and himself had said, as they passed by that spot.

But it was not politics which most pre-occupied Mothril; he, therefore, quickly reverted to the examination of the foot-prints.

He then discovered the track of feet which went as far as the garden wall. Three men had come down; one had been as far as the fig-tree, in the branches of which he had hidden, for the lower boughs were broken. He must have been merely a sentinel.

The other had come as far as the honeysuckle bower; he was, doubtless, a spy.

The third, lastly, had got as far as the clump of trees; had remained there awhile, and from the clump had gained the pavilion of Aïssa; this last was certainly a lover.

Mothril then returned once more to the foot of the wall separating the house of Ernauton de St. Colombe from the mansion sold to the Prince of Wales. Everything now became as clear and legible as in a book.

The lower part of the ladder had hollowed two holes, and the upper had injured the coping of the wall.

"All comes from that quarter," said the Moor. He then mounted so as to look over the wall, and plunged an eager look into Ernauton's garden; but it was still early, and we have said that Agénor and Musaron had slept late. Mothril, therefore, saw nothing; he only remarked on the further side of the wall, another series of footsteps leading to the house of Ernauton.

"I will be on my guard," he said.

All day the Moor sought for news in the neighbourhood, but Ernauton's servants were discreet; besides, they did not know Henry de Transtaniara,

and saw Agénor for the first time. They said so little, and gave so little light to Mothril's story, or to Mothril himself, by saying, "Our guest is the godson of the Seigneur Ernauton de St. Colombe," that Mothril resolved to trust only to himself.

The night came.

The king, Don Pedro, and his faithful minister were expected at the palace of the Prince of Wales. Mothril at the hour agreed on for the visit was in readiness, and, in company with his prince, entered the council like a man whom household cares cannot distract from his duty.

As to Mauléon, as he had watched the Moor go out, as he knew that Aïssa was alone, he took his sword, as he had done on the day preceding, ordered his squire to keep the horses saddled in readiness in Ernauton's court-yard, and leaving the ladder against the wall in the same spot as the day before, he entered, without any accident, the Prince of Wales's garden.

It was a night similar to the beautiful nights of the east, similar to the beautiful night which had preceded. Nothing troubled the felicity of Agénor's heart, unless the very fullness of his joy; for what is termed presentiment is often only the excess of happiness which makes one tremble at the fragility of that delight which lies within one's grasp, and which may yet be broken by so many shocks. Whoever feels no anxiety is not completely happy, and rarely has the boldest lover gone to a rendezvous given by his mistress without experiencing a shudder of fear.

As to Aïssa, frantic with love like the fairies of those burning climates in which she had been born, she had thought all day of the preceding night, which had seemed to her a dream, and of the night which she awaited, and which seemed the most delicious expression of happiness; kneeling by the open window, inhaling the evening breeze and the perfumes of the flowers, absorbing all those sympathetic sensations which revealed the presence of her lover, she lived only on the thought of that man whom she did not yet hear, whom she did not yet see, but whom she divined under the mysterious shades and sublime silence of the night.

Suddenly she heard a rustling among the leaves, and she leant forward, blushing with pleasure, over the flowers which lined her balcony.

The noise redoubled, a timid step brushing amid the plants, an uncertain and hesitating step, warned her that her well-beloved was approaching.

Mauléon appeared in that broad stream of silvery light which the moon spread between the grove and the mansion.

Immediately, with the lightness of a swallow, the beautiful Moresca, who only waited for his appearance, suspended herself by a long silken rope fastened to the stone balcony, then allowing herself to glide down on the gravel, she fell into Agénor's arms, and clasping his head between her slender fingers:

"Here I am," she said, "you see that I expected you."

And Mauléon, quite bewildered with love, and trembling with a delightful fear, felt his lips imprisoned by a burning kiss.

CHAPTER XIX.

LOVE

BUT if he could not speak, Mauléon could act. He rapidly drew Aïssa under the bower of honey-

suckle which on the preceding eve had sheltered Henry de Transtamara, and there, seating the beautiful Moresca on a grassy bank, he fell at her knees.

"I was waiting for you," said Aïssa.

"Did I then make you wait?" asked Agénor.

"Yes," replied the young girl, "for I have waited for you not only since yesterday, but since the first day that I saw you."

"You love me then," exclaimed Agénor, at the height of bliss.

"I love you, and you, do you love me?"

"Oh! yes, yes, I love you," answered the young man.

"I love you because you are brave," said Aïssa, "and you, why do you love me?"

"Because you are beautiful," said Agénor.

"'Tis true, my face is all you know of me while, for my part, I have had all that you have done related to me."

"Then you know that I am your father's enemy."

"Yes."

"Then you know that not only am I his enemy, but that there is war till death between us?"

"I know it."

"And you do not hate me because I have Mothril?"

"I love you."

"You are right. I hate that man because he dragged Don Frederick, my brother-in-arms, to butchery. I hate that man because he has murdered the unhappy Blanche of Bourbon. Lastly, I hate him, because he keeps you rather as his mistress than as a daughter. Are you truly his daughter, Aïssa?"

"Listen: I know not. It seems to me, that one day, when quite a child, I awakened from a long sleep, and that the first face I saw on opening my eyes was that man's. He called me daughter, and I called him father. But I do not love him; he frightens me."

"Is he then cruel or severe towards you?"

"Quite otherwise; a queen is not served with more punctuality than I am. Each of my wishes is a command. I have only to make a sign, and I am obeyed. All his thoughts appear to have me for their object, all his future appears to rest upon me. I know not what projects he may design to employ me in, but I am often frightened at his gloomy and jealous tenderness."

"Then you do not love him as a daughter should love her father?"

"I fear him, Agénor. Listen: Sometimes he enters my chamber at night, alone, like a spectre, and I tremble. He approaches the bed on which I repose, and his step is so light that it does not wake my women sleeping on the mats, amidst which he passes, as if his feet touched not the earth. But I, however, do not sleep, and through my eyelids which blink with fear, I see his dreadful smile. He then comes near and stoops over my bed. His breath devours my face, and his kiss—that strange kiss—half a father's, half a lover's, by which he means to protect my slumbers, leaves on my forehead or my lip an imprint as painful as that of a hot iron. Such are the visions which besiege me—visions full of reality. Such are the fears with which I lay down every night, and yet something tells me that I do wrong to tremble; for, I repeat, whether sleeping or awake, I exercise a strange empire over him; often I have seen him shake at my frown, and his proud and piercing eye has never been able to sustain the fire of my look. But why, my brave

knight, do you speak to me of Mothril? You do not fear him, you who fear nothing?"

"No, doubtless, my fears are only for you."

"You fear for me; that can be only because you love me well," said Aïssa, with an enchanting smile.

"Aïssa, I have never loved the women of my own country, where, however, the women are so beautiful, and I have often been surprised at my own indifference, but I now know what was the reason. It was that the treasure of my heart might belong entirely to you. You ask if I love you, Aïssa: listen and judge of my love. Were you to tell me to leave everything for you, to abjure everything for you, well Aïssa, my honour excepted, I would make that sacrifice."

"And I," said the young girl, with a divine smile, "I would do still more, for I would sacrifice for you, both my God and my honour."

Agénor did not as yet know that glowing poetry of Oriental passion,* and only now understood it as he looked on the smile of Aïssa.

"Well," said he, entwining her with his arms, "I will not that you sacrifice your God and your honour for me, without my attaching my life to yours. In my country, Aïssa, the woman whom one loves becomes a friend with whom one lives and dies, and who, when she has received our plighted faith, is sure never to be abandoned in the depth of some haram, and made there to serve the younger mistresses of him whom she had loved. Become a Christian, Aïssa, abandon Mothril, and you shall be my wife."

"I was about to ask that of you," said the young girl.

Agénor arose, and as he rose, he bore up his mistress between his nervous arms, and his heart beating against hers, his face sweetly caressed by her fresh and perfumed hair, he ran, with joy at his heart, and rapture on his countenance, to the part of the wall where he had rested the ladder.

In fact, the gentle burthen was no weight to the young man, who cleared, rapidly as an arrow, clumps of trees and the borders of alleys.

He was already within sight of the wall, which he perceived through a row of trees, when suddenly Aïssa, more agile than a viper, slid through Agénor's arms, brushing with her body that of the young man.

Mauléon stopped; the Moresca had shrunk down at his feet; her hands were extended in the direction of the wall.

"Behold!" she said.

And Mauléon, following her finger, perceived a white figure crouching behind the lower steps of the ladder.

"Oh! oh!" said Agénor to himself, "is it Musaron who is afraid on my account, and who is watching for us? No, no," he added, shaking his head, "Musaron is too prudent to lay himself open to receiving a sword-thrust by mistake."

The shade rose up, and a bluish flash escaped from its girdle.

"Mothril!" exclaimed Aïssa.

Roused by that terrible word, Agénor drew his sword.

* Passionate if you will, but *not* Oriental. Religious reverence and filial subordination have always been the characteristics of Eastern feeling and society, and more evils will be found in those climes attached to their excess than to their defect. Throughout the greater part of Asia, and all the Mohammedan countries, the duties of justice and humanity are most frequently neglected, but the sentiment of reverence is exhibited everywhere. Honour, in the chivalric sense of the term, never has been an eastern sentiment.—TRANSLATOR.

Without doubt, the Moor had not previously perceived the young girl, but as soon as he had heard her cry, as soon as her tall and slender figure had emerged from the darkness, he uttered a terrible shout, and sprung blindly towards Agénor.

But love was still more active than hatred. By a movement quick as thought, Aïssa lowered the visor of the knight's helmet, and Mothril found himself opposite an iron statue entwined by the arms of his daughter.

Mothril stopped.

"Aïssa," he murmured, dejectedly, while his arms dropped by his side.

"Yes, Aïssa," she replied, with a savage energy, which doubled Mauléon's love, and made a chill creep through the Moor's veins; "do you wish to kill me?—strike. As to him, you know well, do you not? that he does not fear you?"

And she pointed to Agénor.

Mothril extended his hand to seize her, but she then stepped backward and unmasked Mauléon, erect, motionless, and sword in hand.

And her eye beamed with such violent hatred that Mothril raised his sword.

But it was then he, in his turn, who felt his arm held back by that of Aïssa.

"No," said she, "do not strike him before me. You are strong, you are armed, you are invulnerable; pass before him and go away."

"Ah!" said Mothril, overthrowing the ladder with a kick, "you are strong, you are armed, you are invulnerable—we shall see."

He then gave a shrill whistle, and a dozen Moors appeared, axe and scymitar in hand.

"Ah! dogs of infidels!" exclaimed Agénor; "come on, and we shall see."

"Death to the Christian!" cried Mothril; "death!"

"Fear nothing," said Aïssa.

And with a calm and firm step she advanced between the knight and his adversaries.

"Mothril," she said, "I wish to see this young man depart hence, hear you? I wish to see him depart hence safe and sound, without a hair of his head being hurt, and if not, woe be unto you."

"But you love this wretch, then?" cried Mothril.

"I love him," said Aïssa.

"Another reason, then, why he should die; strike," said Mothril, raising his poinard.

"Mothril!" exclaimed the young girl, knitting her brow, while fire flashed from her eyes, "did you not understand what I said? or must I repeat a second time that I will that this young man depart hence at this moment?"

"Strike!" said Mothril, furiously.

Agénor made a movement to be on his guard.

"Wait," said she, "and you will see the tiger become a lamb."

At these words, she drew from her girdle a keen and pointed dagger, and uncovering her beautiful bosom, burnished like a Valencia pomegranate, she leant the sharpened point against her flesh, which yielded to the dangerous pressure.

The Moor uttered a cry of anguish.

"Listen," said she, "by the God of Arabs, whom I disown; by the God of Christians, who shall be hereafter mine, I swear to you, that if any hurt befall that young man, I will kill myself."

"Aïssa!" cried the Moor, "have mercy; you will drive me mad."

"Fling away your cangiar, then," said the young girl.

The Moor obeyed.

"Order your slaves to depart."

Mothril gave a sign, and the slaves went to a distance.

Aïssa then cast a prolonged glance around her, like a queen who wishes to be assured of obedience.

Then fixing on the young man a look moist with tenderness, and burning with desire, she said in a whisper, "Agénor approach, that I may bid you adieu."

"Will you not follow me?" asked the young man.

"No; for he would rather kill me than let me go. I remain, that both may be saved."

"But you will always love me?" asked Mauléon.

"Look at that star," resumed Aïssa, pointing out to the young man the most brilliant of those constellations which illumed the firmament.

"Oh! I see it," said Agénor.

"Well," said Aïssa, "that shall be extinct in heaven, before love is extinct in my heart. Adieu!"

And raising the visor of her lover's helmet, she impressed a long kiss on his lips, while the Moor gnawed his hands with vexation.

"Now leave me," said Aïssa to the knight, "but be prepared for all that may befall you."

And placing herself at the foot of the ladder which Agénor had reared against the wall, she smiled as she looked at the young man, while extending her hand towards Mothril like a tamer of tigers, who makes the animal expected to devour him, crouch at his feet.

"Adieu!" said Agénor; "for the last time—remember your promise."

"Till we meet again!" replied the beautiful Moresca; "I will keep it."

Agénor sent a last kiss to the young girl, and jumped to the other side of the wall.

A growl from the Moor followed the prey which had escaped him.

"Now," said Aïssa to Mothril, "do not allow me to perceive that you watch over me too closely; do not allow me to suspect that you treat me as a slave, for you know I have the means to free myself. Come, my father, it is late, let us return to the house."

Mothril allowed her to retake, indolent and dreaming, the road to the pavilion. He picked up his long dagger, and passing his hand over his forehead: "Child," he murmured, "in some months' time, perhaps in some days, you shall not thus tame Mothril."

At the moment the young girl was putting her foot on the threshold of the door, Mothril heard steps behind him.

"Go in quickly, Aïssa," said he; "here comes the king." The young girl went in and shut the door as leisurely as if she had heard nothing. Mothril saw her disappear; the moment after the king was by his side.

"Well," said the king, "we have conquered, friend Mothril; but why did you leave the council at the moment it was about to commence its deliberation?"

"Because," answered Mothril, "I did not think a poor Moorish slave was in his place, amidst such powerful Christian princes."

"You lie, Mothril," said Don Pedro, "you were anxious on account of your daughter, and you went in to watch over her."

"On my honour, your highness," said Mothril, smiling at this engrossing thought of the king, Don Pedro, "one would say that you thought still more about her than I do."

And both went in, but not without Don Pedro casting an inquisitive look towards the window of the pavilion, behind which might be perceived the outline of a female figure.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH IT WILL BE SEEN THAT MESSIRE BERTRAND DUGUESCLIN WAS A NO LESS GOOD ARITHMETICIAN THAN A GREAT GENERAL.

WHILE Prince Henry of Transtamara and his companion, Agénor, were taking the road towards Bordeaux, where the events we have related befell them, Duguesclin, invested with full powers from the king, Charles V., had united the principal leaders of companies, and explained to them his plan of campaign.

There was more of military art and tactics than one thinks for in those men of prey, who like their next of kin, rapacious birds, or their brother wolves, were subjected to those daily observances of vigilance, industry, and resolution, which give superiority to men of a common nature, and genius to those of a more elevated stamp.

They therefore understand admirably the general dispositions which the Breton hero submitted to them, and which formed that *ensemble* of operations which may always be planned in advance, and whence result those special operations which circumstances command. But to all these warlike projects, they objected one argument to which there was no reply: Money.

It is right to say that the objection was unanimous, that the argument was advanced with one voice.

"'Tis true," said Duguesclin, "and I had thought well on the subject."

The chiefs gave a nod to signify that they were obliged to him for his forethought.

"But," added Duguesclin, "you will have some after the first battle."

"We must, however, live till then," put in the Green Knight, "and give some rate of pay to our soldiers."

"Unless," said Caverley, "we continued to live on the French peasants. But their cries, for those peasant devils are always howling, their cries would scorch the ears of our illustrious constable. Besides, where is the use of becoming an honourable captain if one is to plunder as when one was an adventurer?"

"Excessively right," said Duguesclin.

"I will add," said Claude l'Ecorcheur,* another ruffian, quite meet company for his brother robbers, and who passed for being less ferocious than Caverley, but a hundred times more of a traitor and a plunderer, "I will add, I say, that we are now the allies of monseigneur, the King of France, as we are about to avenge the death of his sister-in-law, and that we should be unworthy of that honour, an honour inestimable for simple adventurers like ourselves, if we did not cease momentarily at least, to ruin the people of our royal ally."

"Judiciously and profoundly observed," replied Duguesclin, "but propose some means by which we may have money."

"It is not our business to have money," said Hugh de Caverley, "our business is to receive it."

"There is nothing to be said in answer to

* Literally the flayer. But *écorcher quelqu'un* is used frequently as a synonym for plundering, while it is not so used in English.—TRANSLATOR.

that," said Duguesclin, "and the doctor would not be a better logician than you, Sir Hugh; but let us know what you ask for?"

The chiefs exchanged looks and appeared to converse with their eyes, then all no doubt agreed to leave to Caverley, the care of their general interest, for Caverley resumed:—

"We will be reasonable, messire constable, on the faith of a captain!"

At this promise and invocation Duguesclin felt a shudder creep through his whole body.

"I attend," said he; "speak on."

"Well!" said Caverley, "let King Charles V. pay us but one golden crown per man, until we are on hostile ground. It is not much, certainly; but we take into consideration that we have the honour to be his allies, and we will be modest from consideration for this worthy prince. We have what one may call fifty thousand soldiers."

"Nearly that number," said Duguesclin.

"A little more, or a little less."

"A little less, I think."

"No matter," said Caverley "we engage to do with those we have what others would do with fifty thousand. It is therefore exactly as if we had them."

"That makes then fifty thousand golden crowns," said Duguesclin.

"Yes, for the soldiers," resumed Caverley.

"Well, then?" asked Duguesclin.

"Well, the officers remain."

"Right," said the constable, "I forgot the officers."

"And what would you allow the officers?"

"I think," said the Green Knight, fearing, no doubt, lest Caverley should rate them below their value, "I think that these brave men who are mostly persons of skill and prudence, are well worth five golden crowns a-head; remember that they have almost all, varlets, squires, and knife-bearers, further, three horses each."

"The devil!" said Bertrand, "here are officers better provided than those of the king, my master."

"We stick to that," said Caverley.

"And you say five golden crowns for each man."

"Which is the lowest price that, according to my opinion, one can claim from them. I was about to ask for six, but as the Green Knight has named a sum, I will not dispute it, and will abide by what he has said."

Bertrand looked at them, and believed himself once more among those Jews to whom his master had sometime sent him to negotiate small loans.

"Cursed rascals," thought he, while he assumed his most gracious smile; "how I would make you all swing, were I the stronger."

Then aloud:

"Gentlemen, I have just reflected, as you have perceived, on your demand, and the price of five golden crowns for each officer does not seem to me at all exaggerated"

"Ah, ah!" said the Green Knight, astonished at Duguesclin's facility.

"And how many officers have you?" asked Messire Bertrand.

"I have a thousand," said Caverley.

He doubled the real number.

"I, eight hundred," said the Green Knight.

He doubled like his colleague.

"I, a thousand," said Claude l'Ecorcheur.

This last tripled the number.

The others imitated the generous example, and the number of officers was carried to four thousand.

"That makes one officer for eleven soldiers,"

said Duguesclin, with admiration. "A most magnificent army truly, and one which must possess the most consummate discipline."

"Yes," said Caverley, modestly; "the fact is, that it is well enough led."

"That makes then twenty thousand crowns," said Bertrand.

"Of gold," said the Green Knight.

"By God," said the constable, "twenty thousand golden crowns, we were saying; which added to the fifty thousand granted make seventy thousand."

"The fact is that that is the sum to a carolus," said the Green Knight, who admired the ease with which the constable cast up the addition.

"But——" remarked Caverley.

Bertrand did not allow him time to finish his phrase.

"But," he said, "I understand: we forget the chiefs."

Caverley opened his eyes. Not only did Bertrand attend to his objections but he anticipated them.

"You forget yourselves," he continued; "noble disinterestedness! but I have not forgotten you, gentlemen. Let us count then. You chiefs are ten in all, are you not?"

The adventurers counted after Duguesclin. They were much inclined to find twenty, but it was not practicable.

"Ten chiefs," they repeated.

Caverley, the Green Knight, and Claude l'Ecorcheur began to look at the ceiling.

"Which," resumed the constable, "at three thousand golden crowns per chief, makes thirty thousand golden crowns, does it not?"

Dazzled and suffocated at these words, lost at so much munificence, the chiefs arose, and as happy at the enormous sum at which they were valued, as at the estimate of their merit, which made them a thousand times superior to their soldiers, they raised their gigantic swords, flourished their helmets in the air, and roared, rather than cried:

"Noël, Noël. Liesse to the worthy constable."

"Ah! brigands," murmured he, hypocritically lowering his eyes, as if the acclamations of the adventurers had reached his heart, "I will lead you, with the help of our lord and of our lady of Carmel, to a spot whence not one of you will return."

Then aloud:

"Total, a hundred thousand golden crowns, by means of which we shall complete the settlement of our accounts."

"Noël, Noël," repeated the adventurers, at the height of enthusiasm.

"Now, gentlemen," said Duguesclin, "you have my knightly word, that the sum shall be paid you before commencing the campaign. Only understand, you cannot have it at once; for I do not carry the royal treasure with me."

"Agreed," said the chiefs, still too much rejoiced to be very exacting.

"You therefore give credit, gentlemen, to the King of France, on the word of his constable; that is agreed; and," said he, raising his head with that lofty air which made the bravest tremble, "my word is good; we will depart, therefore, as trusty soldiers; and, if at the moment of entering Spain, the money has not come, then, gentlemen, you will have two securities—firstly, your liberty, which I restore you; and, further, a prisoner, who is well worth a hundred thousand golden crowns."

"Who is he?" asked Caverley.

"Myself, by God!" replied Duguesclin, "poor as I am. For even if the women in my country had to spin night and day to make a hundred thousand crowns for my ransom, I promise you that the ransom would be paid."

"It is agreed," replied the adventurers with one voice, and they all took the constable's hand in sign of the alliance.

"When do we leave?" asked the Green Knight.

"Immediately, if it please you, gentlemen."

"Immediately," repeated Hugh. "In fact, gentlemen, as there is no more shearing here, I had just as lief that we were speedily elsewhere."

Each ran forthwith to his post, and had his banner raised above his tent, the drums beat, and an immense movement took place throughout the camp; and one might see flowing towards the principal tents, those soldiers who had assembled at Duguesclin's approach, but who afterwards, like the waves of the sea, had rolled back to a distance.

Two hours later, the tents were struck, and the beasts of burden bent under their loads; the horses neighed, and the lances grouping together flashed in the sun's beams.

In the mean time, on both banks of the river, might be seen flying the long-enslaved peasants, who now, somewhat tardily set free, were bringing back to their tenantless tents their women and their damaged furniture. Towards mid-day, the army commenced its march, descending the course of the Saône, and forming two columns, of which each followed a bank. One would have said it was a migration of barbarians, about to accomplish one of those terrible missions on which the Lord had employed them, and following the steps of one of those scourges of God, who were called Alaric, Genseric, or Attila.

And yet he, whose steps they followed, was the good constable, Bertrand Duguesclin, who, pensive behind his banner, his head sunk down between his broad shoulders, said to himself as he journeyed on, on his vigorous charger—

"All goes well, if it last. But the money, when can I get it; and if I do not get it, how will the king be able to assemble an army strong enough to prevent the return of these brigands, who will re-descend from the Pyrenees, more hungry than ever."

Lost in these gloomy reflections, the good knight went on, turning from time to time to look on the motley and noisy waves of the multitude rolling around him, and his brain alone worked harder than the fifty thousand brains of the adventurers.

And yet, God knows what they all dreamed, each thinking himself as it were master and lord of India; dreams the more exaggerated, since the country was as yet unknown to them.

Suddenly, at the moment the sun was declining behind the last orange-coloured cloud of the horizon, the chiefs who rode behind the good knight, and who began to wonder at his taciturnity, saw him raise his head, shake his shoulders like a conqueror, and heard him call to his varlets:—

"Halloo, Jacelard! halloo, Berniquet! a draught of wine, and the best our provision can furnish."

Then he muttered in his visor: "By our lady of Auray, I think I hold the hundred thousand crowns, and that, without in any respect doing hurt to King Charles."

Then turning towards the chiefs of the adven-

turers who had not been without anxiety at seeing the constable so serious since mid-day:

"Jarni-dieu, messieurs," said he in his sonorous voice, "suppose we take a cup together?"

This was an appeal which the adventurers took care not to leave unanswered; they therefore came together, and a fair cask of Châlon wine was emptied in the King of France's honour.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH A POPE WILL BE SEEN TO PAY THE EXPENSES OF AN EXCOMMUNICATION.

THE army continued its march.

All roads lead to Rome, the road to Avignon might lead to Spain. The adventurers followed then the road of Avignon in confidence.

It was there that Pope Urban V. first a Benedictine, then Abbot of Saint Germain d'Auxerre, and Prior of Saint Victor, of Marseille, had been elected Pope, on the condition that he would in no ways disturb in their terrestrial beatitude, the Roman cardinals and princes, a condition which he had fully carried out from the time of its election in all its bland rigidity, and through which he hoped to obtain a right to die as late as possible in odour of sanctity; a wish in which he succeeded.

It will be remembered that the successor of St. Peter had been touched by the complaints of the King of France as regarded the great companies, and that he had excommunicated those great companies, a political master-stroke of which King Charles V. in his intelligent forethought had pointed out to Duguesclin the unfavourable side. Since this interview between the prince and constable, the mind of the last had been filled with an ardent desire to replace matters on their former footing.

Now the illuminating idea which had struck Bertrand on the great road from Châlons to Lyon during that bright sunset of which we said not a word, engrossed as we were ourselves by the taciturnity of the good constable, was to go with his fifty thousand adventurers, more or less, as Caverley had said, to pay a visit to Pope Urban V.

This came the more in season, since in proportion as the adventurers drew nearer to the States of the Pontiff, against whom however harmless the excommunication had fallen on them, they had not the less harboured resentment, they felt their warlike and ferocious instincts reviving.

Indeed they had already been too long under constraint.

When they had arrived at two leagues from the town, Bertrand ordered a halt, assembled the chiefs, and commanded that they should extend the front of their array, so that an imposing circle should girdle the town, forming an immense arc, of which the river would be the chord.

Then mounting to horse with a dozen French knights and men-at-arms, who formed his suite, he presented himself at the gate of Vaucluse, demanding to speak with the Sovereign Pontiff.

Urban, aware of the approach of this army of brigands, as one is aware of an inundation, had united his army, composed of two or three thousand men, and knowing all the value of his chief arm, he made ready to apply a decisive blow with Saint Peter's keys on the heads of the adventurers.

But it must be said, that his leading thought was that the brigands dismayed at the excommunication, came to sue for pardon, and to offer to redeem their sins by some new crusade, trusting to

their number and their strength to give validity to the humility of their submission.

He saw the constable hurrying on with a haste which surprised him. He was at that moment dining on his terrace shaded with orange trees and rose laurels, in company with his brother, the Canon Auglio Grinvald, promoted by him to the Bishopric of Avignon, one of the first sees in Christendom.

"Is it you, Messire Bertrand Duguesclin?" exclaimed the Pope. "Are you then with this army which suddenly comes upon us, without our knowing whence or for what reason?"

"Alas! most holy father, alas! I command it," said the constable, kneeling down.

"Then I breathe," said the Pope.

"Oh! oh! and I also," said Auglio, as he dilated his chest, by a deep and joyful inspiration.

"You breathe, most holy father!" said Bertrand. And he then for his part heaved a sad and painful sigh, as if he had inherited the cares of the Pope. "And why do you breathe?" he continued.

"I breathe because I know their intentions."

"I think not," said Bertrand.

"With a chief like you, constable, with a man who respects the church!"

"Yes, most holy father, yes, I respect the church," said the constable.

"Then you are welcome, my dear son. But what does this army want with me, let me know?"

"In the first instance," said Bertrand, eluding the question and delaying an explanation as long as was in his power; "in the first instance, your holiness will learn, I doubt not, with pleasure, that a roaring war against the infidels is their chief concern."

Urban V. cast a glance at his brother as if to say, "Well, was I mistaken?"

Then, satisfied at this new proof of his infallibility which he had just given himself, he turned toward the constable.

"Against the infidels, my son?" said he, with emotion.

"Yes, most holy father."

"And whom in particular, my son?"

"Against the Moors of Spain."

"It is a wholesome thought, constable, and worthy of a Christian hero; for, I presume, that it owes its origin to you."

"To me, and to the good king, Charles V., most holy father," replied Bertrand.

"You will partake the glory, and God will apportion the share of the head which has conceived, and the arm which has executed it. Then your end——"

"Our end, and may God permit us to attain it, is to exterminate them, most holy father, and to devote the greater portion of their spoils to the glorification of the Catholic religion."

"Embrace me, my son," said Urban V., touched to his heart, and filled with admiration for the valiant soldier who thus placed himself at the church's service.

Bertrand drew back from this great honour, and was satisfied with kissing the hand of his holiness.

"But," resumed the constable, after an instant pause, "you are not unaware, most holy father, that those soldiers whom I command, and who are going on so heroic a pilgrimage, are the same that your holiness thought proper, not long since, to excommunicate."

"I was right at the time, my son, and I think that you also, at that time, were of my opinion."

"Your holiness is always right," said Bertrand,

eluding the apostrophe; but so it is, that they are excommunicated, and I will not conceal from you, most holy father, that this has a detestable effect in regard to people about to fight for the Christian religion."

"My son," said Urban, leisurely emptying his glass filled with a golden Monte-Pulicano, which he relished above all other wines, even those which are grown on the borders of that beautiful river whose waters bathed the walls of his capital, "my son, the Church, such as I will it, is, as you well know, neither intolerant nor implacable; there is pardon for all sins, above all, when the sinner sincerely repents; and if you, one of the pillars of the faith, will be a guarantee for their return to orthodoxy——"

"Oh, certainly, yes, most holy father."

"Then," said Urban, "I will revoke the anathema, and I will consent to let only a part of my anger weigh upon them; full of indulgence, as you see, my son," continued the Pope, with a smile.

Bertrand bit his lips, as he reflected how deeply his holiness continued to plunge into error.

Urban continued, with a voice full of mildness, and yet not devoid of that firmness which so well becomes one who forgives, but who, at the same time, well knows the gravity of the offence, which he is willing to forget.

"You understand, my dear son, that these men have amassed impious riches, and as the Ecclesiastes says—'*Omne malum in pravo faenore.*'"

"I do not understand Hebrew, most holy father," replied Bertrand, with humility.

"I, therefore, spoke to you simply in the Latin tongue, my son," replied Urban, with a smile; "but I forgot that warriors are not Benedictines. This, then, is the translation of the words I spoke to you, and which, as you will see, are marvelously adapted to the state of affairs—'*All evils are contained in wealth ill acquired.*'"

"How fine!" said Duguesclin, smiling in his sleeve at the turn which the proverb was likely to play his holiness.

"Therefore," continued Urban, "I have decided, and that from regard to you, my son, for you only I swear, that these misbelievers—for misbelievers, trust me, they are—although they repent, that these misbelievers, I say, should be subjected to a tithe on their goods, and that by a payment of this fine, they should be freed from excommunication. And now, although as you see, I act spontaneously, and even without pressing me, laud to them well, my dear son, the favour which I am conferring, for it is immense."

"It is immense, truly," replied Bertrand, kneeling down; "and I doubt whether they will acknowledge it, as much as it deserves."

"Is it not?" resumed Urban. "And now, my son, let us see at what sum we can fix the price of redemption."

And Urban turned round as if to question on that delicate and grave affair, his brother, who was there luxuriously learning his trade as a future Pope.*

"Most holy father," replied Auglio, throwing himself back in his arm chair, and shaking his head, "much temporal gold would be required to compensate the pain of your spiritual thunderbolts."

"No doubt, no doubt," resumed Urban, "but

* An ill-considered joke, as all know that the Pope has never run in families in practice any more than in theory.—TRANSLATOR.

we are clement ; and it must be said, all invites us to clemency. The heavens are so beautiful in this country of Avignon, the air is so pure when the mistrale is willing to let us forget that it exists in the caverns of the Mount Ventoux, that all these benefits of the Lord announce mercy and brotherhood to men. Yes," added the Pope, extending a golden cup to a young page dressed in white, who immediately filled it up "yes, men are most decidedly brothers."

"Permit me, most holy father," said Bertrand, "I have forgotten to tell your holiness in what capacity I came hither. I came in the capacity of an ambassador from the brave fellows of whom we are speaking."

"And as such, you ask for our indulgence, do you not?"

"In the first instance, yes, most holy father; your indulgence is always an excellent thing for us poor soldiers who may be killed from one moment to another."

"Oh! that indulgence, my son, you have. We wished to speak of our mercy, or our pardon, if you like it better."

"We count also on that, most holy father"

"Yes; but you know on what conditions we can grant it."

"Alas!" resumed Deguesclin, "inacceptable conditions, sovereign pontiff: for your holiness forgets what the army is about to perform in Spain."

"What it is about to perform in Spain?"

"Yes, most holy father, I thought I had told you that it was going to fight for the Christian Church."

"Well?"

"Well! it has the right, when going on so holy a mission, not only to every pardon and every indulgence from your holiness, but also to your aid."

"My aid! Messire Bertrand," replied Urban, who began to feel some anxiety; "what, my son, do you understand by these words?"

"I understand, most holy father, that the Apostolic See is generous, that it is rich, that the propagation of the faith is of service to it, and that it may pay for its interests."

"What say you, then, Messire Bertrand?" interrupted Urban, rising in his arm chair, with ill-dissembled rage.

"His holiness has thoroughly understood me, I perceive," answered the constable, rising up and brushing his knees.

"Not so," exclaimed the Pope, who on the contrary was resolved not to understand; "not so, explain yourself."

"Most holy father, the distinguished soldiers, a little misbelieving it is true, but very repentant, whom you see from here, numerous as the leaves of the forests and as the sands of the sea, the comparison is taken from the holy books, I think—the distinguished soldiers whom you see from here, I say, under the orders of the Seigneur Hugh de Caverley, of the Green Knight, of Claude l'Ecorcheur, of the Begue de Vilaines, of Olivier de Mauny, and other valorous knights, expect a subsidy from your holiness to enable them to take the field. The King of France has promised a hundred thousand golden crowns; he is a very Christian prince, and deserves canonization certainly, neither more nor less than a Pope. Now your highness being the key-stone of Christianity, may well give for example two hundred thousand crowns."

Urban gave another bound in his arm chair.—But this elasticity in the muscles of the holy father, elasticity which could only arise from excess

of nervous excitement, did not disconcert Bertrand, who remained in the same firm but respectful attitude.

"Messire," said his holiness, "I see one becomes corrupted in the society of robbers, and certain people whom I will not name, and who have hitherto enjoyed the favours of the holy see, would have been paid more according to their desserts, had they undergone its severities."

This terrible sentence, from which the Pope expected a great effect, to Urban's great astonishment left the constable undisturbed.

"I have," continued the holy father, "six thousand soldiers."

Bertrand remarked within himself that Urban V. was lying by one half, like Hugh de Caverley and the Green Knight, which, notwithstanding the urgency of his position, seemed somewhat rash for a Pope.

"I have six thousand soldiers in Avignon, and thirty thousand inhabitants fit to bear arms."

This time Urban only overstated by a third.

"Fit to bear arms; the town is fortified; and there were there neither rampart, ditches, nor pikes; I have the tiara of St. Peter on my brow, and alone I would arrest with the invocation of God, barbarians less courageous than were the soldiers of Attila, whom Pope Leo arrested before Rome."

"Most holy father reflect. Spiritual and temporal arms do not succeed well with the vicars of Christ, when employed against the kings of France, who are the eldest sons of the church.—Witness your predecessor Boniface VIII. who received, God help me from excusing such audacity, a blow in the face from Colonna, and who died in prison after gnawing away his knuckles.* You see already how far the excommunication has served you, since those you have excommunicated, instead of flying and being dispersed, have on the contrary, united to demand forgiveness, with arms in their hands. As to temporal arms, six thousand soldiers and twenty thousand unskilled citizens are worth little; in all twenty-six thousand men, and that counting every burgher as a man, against fifty thousand proved warriors fearing neither God nor the devil, and much more accustomed to Popes than were the soldiers of Attila, who saw a Pope for the first time. It is on this last point especially, that I beg your holiness to reflect before you present yourself to the adventurers."

"They would dare!" cried Urban, his eye gleaming with anger.

"Holy father, I know not whether they would dare, nor what they would dare; but they are very daring fellows."

"The anointed of the Lord! the wretches!—and Christians?"

"Pardon me, most holy father; they are not Christians, they are excommunicate—what can

* Boniface VIII. was surprised and made prisoner in Anagni by Nogaret, a legist, the agent of Philip IV (le Bel) King of France, and by his personal enemies, the chiefs of the Colonna family, acting in concert with the former—After a week's captivity, an insurrection of the people of the town liberated him. But, being old and infirm, he received such a shock from the indignity he had suffered, that he died very shortly after. His successor in the papedom, Benedict XI, having animadverted on the conduct of Philip IV. in this proceeding, was immediately afterwards poisoned in a plate of figs, not without suspicion of that sovereign's instrumentality. The hostility between Boniface and Philip arose from the nefarious persecution of the Templars carried on by the latter, under the pretext of religion but really with the view of stripping them of their wealth.—TRANSLATOR.



you expect such people to respect? Ah! were they not excommunicate, that would be a different matter; they might fear excommunication; but now they fear nothing."

The stronger the argument, the more the anger of the Pope increased; he rose to his feet, and advanced towards Bertrand.

"You, who give me this strange advice," said he, "you must think yourself very safe here?"

"I," said Bertrand, with a composure which would have disconcerted Saint Peter himself, "I am much more in safety here than your holiness's self, for admitting, which I do not suppose, that any injury should befall me, I can answer for it beforehand, that not one stone would be left standing on another, either of the good town of Avignon, or of the magnificent palace you have built in it, however solid its construction. Oh! these rascals are terrible hands at demolition, and will make a fortress crumble in as little time as it

takes a regular army to upset an outwork; then they would not stop there: after passing from the town to the castle, they would pass from the castle to the garrison, and from the garrison to the citizens, and not two bones would be left together of all your thirty thousand men, which would cause many souls to be lost through the fault of your holiness; therefore, knowing how prudent your holiness is, I find myself more in safety here than in my camp."

"Well!" cried the Pope furiously and gnawing the curb which the constable had placed on him; "well! I persist, I will wait."

"In truth, most holy father," said Bertrand, "I give you my honour as a gentleman that I do not recognise your holiness in this refusal; I was convinced, for my own part, though I see I deceived myself, I was convinced that your holiness would anticipate the sacrifice which the faith requires you to make, and that following the example set

by the good king, Charles V., the two hundred thousand crowns would be offered by the Holy Apostolic See. Believe me, most holy father," added the constable, assuming an air of much concern, "it is very painful for a good Christian like myself to see the first prince of the church refusing his assistance to a pious enterprise like that which we pursue; never will those worthy chiefs consent to believe it."

And saluting more humbly than ever Urban V. who was scapified by the unexpected event which he was called on to encounter, the constable left the terrace, almost without turning round, descended the staircase, and finding at the palace gate his suite, who were beginning to be somewhat anxious on his account, he retook the road to the camp.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE POPE'S LEGATE CAME TO THE CAMP OF THE ADVENTURERS, AND HOW HE WAS RECEIVED THERE.

DUGUESCLIN, on his return to the camp, began to understand that he would experience great difficulties (so long as Urban V. remained in the disposition he had found him in), in executing the fine plan which he had conceived, and which was intended to effect three great objects: to pay the adventurers; to defray the expenses of the campaign, and to assist the king in completing the Hôtel Saint Paul.

The church is obstinate. Charles V. was scrupulous. It would not do to break with his master, under pretence of serving him; nor would it answer at the commencement of a campaign to lay one's-self open to the assaults of superstition, which, from the very first reverses, would not fail to attribute any mishap to the irreligion of the general and to the avenging prayers of the sovereign pontiff.

But Duguesclin was a Breton, that is, he was more obstinate in his own person than all the Popes, whether past or future. He had besides to justify his obstinacy, necessity, that inflexible goddess, whom antiquity has represented with an iron wedge in her hand.

He resolved, therefore, to pursue his design, remaining ready to take counsel from circumstances, and to go on or stop short, according as events should become developed.

He therefore put his men under arms, arranged his baggage, ordered his Bretons, who had joined two days previously, under the conduct of Olivier de Mauny and the Bègue de Vilaines, to move on to Villeneuve; so that from the height of his terrace, which he had not left, the holy father could see the great bluish cordon unrolling like an azure serpent, on the different parts of whose convolutions the setting sun cast a reflection more glowing than gold, and more sinister than the lightnings of the papal anathema.

Urban V. was almost as good a general as he was an excellent monk. He had no need to call on his captain-general to learn that the serpent had only to advance one step more to envelope Avignon in its coil.

"Oh! oh!" said he to his legate, as with an anxious eye he followed this manœuvre, "it seems to me that they are becoming very insolent."

And wishing to learn whether the great companies and the chiefs of those great companies were really as exasperated as Duguesclin had said, Pope Urban V., without any other design than that of learning the state of their minds, dispatched his legate to the general-in-chief.

The legate had not been present at the conference between the Pope and Duguesclin. He was therefore ignorant that Duguesclin had made any other demand than that of relaxation of the excommunication launched against the great companies, on which account he entertained the conviction that he could make his way with a few indulgences and benedictions.

He left, therefore, mounted on his mule, and accompanied by the pale sacristan who served as his acolyte.

We have said, the legate had been informed of nothing. The Pope had judged that imparting his fears to an ambassador would diminish the confidence it was fit he should entertain, in the power of his master. The legate was therefore seen advancing between the town and the camp, beaming with self-satisfaction, and enjoying by anticipation the genuflexions and the signs of the cross which were to greet him on his arrival.

But Duguesclin, like a skilful tactician, had placed the English on guard in the camp, men who were little zealous for the interests of the Pope with whom they had had dissensions for more than a hundred years, and whom further he had had the precaution of conversing with beforehand, that he might mould their opinions in conformity with his views.

"Keep good watch, comrades," he had said on his return to the camp. "It may be possible that his holiness may send against us some companies of his men-at-arms. I have just had a little difference with his holiness on the subject of a certain piece of civility, which, in my own opinion, he owes us as a compensation for the famous excommunication which he launched against us. I say us; for from the moment that you became my soldiers, I have looked on myself as no less excommunicate, nor less devoted to hell than you are. Now his holiness is incomprehensible, on the honour of a constable! His holiness refuses us this civility."

At this unexpected peroration, the English shook their shoulders like mastiffs whose anger is excited by their master.

"Very good, very good!" said they. "Let the Pope come across us, and he shall see that he has to do with true excommunicates!"

Duguesclin, on hearing this reply, had thought them sufficiently instructed, and had passed into the encampment of the French.

"My friends," he had said, "it may be possible that you will witness the arrival of some envoy from the Pope. The sovereign pontiff can you believe it?—the sovereign pontiff, to whom we have given Avignon and its country, refuses me the assistance which I have asked for our good king, Charles V.; and I must avow, even though it may hurt me in your estimation, that we have had some dispute together. In this dispute, which perhaps I was wrong in exciting, of which your conscience will judge, in this dispute the sovereign pontiff was inconsiderate enough to say, that if spiritual arms did not suffice he would have recourse to temporal arms. You see me still quite annoyed on the subject!"

The French, who appear even in the fourteenth century to have held the Pope's soldiers but in very light esteem, were satisfied by replying with shouts of laughter to Duguesclin's brief address.

"Good!" said the constable. "Those fellows will hoot him, and hooting is always a disagreeable noise. Now for my Bretons! With them the task will be more difficult."

In fact the Bretons—above all, the Bretons of that time, people devout even to asceticism—might

well fear a rupture with the sovereign pontiff. Therefore Duguesclin, to prepossess them from the first in his favour, entered their quarters with a countenance of complete dismay. His soldiers adored him not only as their countryman, but also as their father; for there was not one among them who did not personally know the constable by some services rendered, and many among the number had been saved by him, whether from captivity, from death, or from want.

At the sight of that face, which, as we have said, expressed the deepest condemnation, the children of old Armorica pressed around their hero.

"Oh! my children," exclaimed Duguesclin, "you see me in despair. Would you believe that not only does the Pope maintain his excommunication against the great companies, but that he intends it to those who join them in order to avenge the death of our good King Charles's sister. So that we, worthy and loyal Christians, have become misbelievers, dogs, wolves, whom all are licensed to destroy. The sovereign pontiff is mad, on my soul!"

The Bretons uttered a prolonged murmur.

"It must further be said," continued Bertrand Duguesclin, "that he is altogether ill-counselled. By whom I do not know. But what I know is, that he threatens us with his Italian knights; and that at this moment he is engaged—in what? You would scarcely guess. In loading them with indulgences, that they may fight us the better."

The Bretons growled.

"And yet what did I ask of our holy father? the right of receiving Catholic communion and Christian sepulture. It is truly the least which men about to combat the infidel can expect. Now, my children, that is where we are at present. I left him thereupon. I know not what is your opinion, and I believe myself as good a Christian as any; but, I declare, that if our holy father, Urban V., intends to act as a temporal prince towards us, we must think twice on the matter; we cannot allow ourselves to be drubbed by these Pope's soldiers!"

The Bretons bounded at these words with such fury, that it was Duguesclin who was obliged to calm them.

It was just at that moment that the legate, who had gone out by the gate of Loulle, and crossed the bridge of Bénézet, entered the outer lines of the camp.

He wore a beatific smile.

The English ran to the palisades to see him, and folding their arms with insolent phlegm:

"Oh! oh!" said they, "what does this mule want with us?"

The sacristan grew pale with rage at this insult, and yet taking that paternal tone, which is familiar to churchmen:

"You behold," he said, "his holiness's legate."

"Humph!" said the English, "where are the money bags? Is your mule strong enough to bear them. Show us them, come."

"Money! money!" cried others with one voice.

The legate, stupified by this reception, which he was far from expecting, looked at the sacristan who was crossing himself from terror.

And they continued their march through the lines of soldiers, who repeated without ceasing:—"Money! money!"

Not a chief was visible; warned beforehand by Duguesclin, each had withdrawn to his tent.

The two ambassadors traversed the first line,

which as we have said was English, and penetrated as far as the encampment of the French, who, on perceiving the legate, hurried out to meet him.

The legate thought it was to do him honour, and began to plume himself upon it, when, instead of the humble salutations which he expected, he heard great bursts of laughter, resounding from all sides.

"Good day, Mr. Legate," exclaimed the soldiery, as full of raillery in the fourteenth century as they are in our own day, "does his holiness perchance send you to us as a specimen of his cavalry?"

"Is it with the jaws of his ambassador's steed," said another, "that the holy father proposes to put us to the edge of the sword?"

And they went on switching the hind quarters of the ambassador's mule, laughing and joking with a noise and uproariousness which hurt the legate more than the pecuniary demands of the English. These, however, had not quite left him, as some had followed, shouting with all the strength of their lungs, "Money! money!"

The legate cleared the second line as rapidly as he could.

It was then the turn of the Bretons, but these jested less than the others. They came to meet the legate with flashing eyes and closed fists, shouting with their formidable voices, "Absolution! absolution!" And that in such fashion, that at the end of a quarter of an hour, amidst all these various cries, it was impossible for the legate to discern anything amid all this frightful uproar, similar to that of furious waves, of roaring thunder, of the whistling wind, and of boats thrown back, crashing on the coast.

The sacristan began to lose his self-possession, and to tremble in all his limbs. It was long since the perspiration had been running down the legate's forehead, and yet his teeth chattered.

At last the legate, growing paler and paler, and beginning to find the strength of his mule failing, as more than one of the jesting Frenchmen had jumped on its back, during the road, asked in a timid voice,—

"The chiefs, gentlemen, the chiefs! will any of you have the goodness to lead me to the chiefs?"

It was only then, that Duguesclin, hearing that lamenting voice, thought it proper to interfere.

He made his way through the crowd with his robust shoulders which made men undulate around him, as the chest of the buffalo shakes the grass of the savannahs, or the reeds of the Pontine marshes.

"Ah! ah!" he said, "is it you, M. le Légat, an envoy from our holy father? *jarni-Dieu*, what an honour for excommunicate persons. Back soldiers! back! Ah! M. le Légat, be so good as to enter my tent. Gentlemen," he cried with a voice which evinced but little anger, "pray respect the legate, he brings us, no doubt, some satisfactory reply from his holiness. M. le Légat, will you take my hand that I may help you to alight from your mule? There; are you now safely down? That's it; now come with me."

The legate in fact had not waited to be twice told, and taking the robust hand which the Breton knight had held out to him, he had jumped down, and passed through the crowd of soldiers assembled to see him, amidst shrugs, contortions, roars of laughter, and comments, which made the sacristan's hair stand on end, though he had not the gift of tongues; for expressive gestures supplied the place of words with those misbelievers.

"What society!" murmured the church rat, "what society!"

Once within his tent, Bertrand Duguesclin made a profound bow to the legate, and begged pardon for his soldiers in terms which restored a little courage to the poor ambassador.

Then the legate seeing himself nearly out of danger, and under the safeguard of the constable's honour, reassumed all his dignity, and began an harangue, of which the sense ran as follows:—

"That the Pope had sometimes an absolution for rebels, but money for none."

The other chiefs who, according to Duguesclin's advice, had come by degrees, and entered one after the other, heard this reply, and did not hide from the legate that it gave them little satisfaction.

"Then, M. le Légat," said Duguesclin, "I begin to believe that we shall never be able to make honest fellows of our soldiers."

"Well," said the legate, "the idea of that eternal damnation to which, by a word, he has consigned so many souls, has touched his holiness; as among all those souls there may be some less guilty than others, or even who sincerely repent. His holiness will therefore perform in your favours a miracle of clemency and goodness."

"Ah! ah!" said the chiefs: "What will that be? Let us hear what the miracle is?"

"His holiness," replied the legate "will grant that absolution which you so much desire."

"And besides?" said Bertrand.

"But," said the legate, who had not heard his holiness speak on any other subject, "is not that all?"

"No," said Bertrand, "no, it is very far from being so. there remains the question of money."

"The Pope did not speak to me of that; and I am completely ignorant on the subject," answered the legate. "I thought," resumed the constable, "that the English had given you a hint upon it. I heard them crying out 'money! money!'"

"The holy father has none: his coffers are empty."

Duguesclin turned towards the chiefs, as if to ask them whether that were a satisfactory answer.

The chiefs shrugged their shoulders contemptuously.

"What do those gentlemen say?" asked the legate anxiously.

"They say that the holy father has only to do as they do."

"How so?"

"When their coffers are empty."

"And what do they do?"

"They fill them."

And Duguesclin rose up.

The legate understood that the audience was at an end. A slight flush had risen to the brown cheeks of the constable.

The legate got across his mule and made ready to return to Avignon in the company of his sacristan, whose dismay was always increasing.

"Wait, wait!" said Duguesclin, "wait monseigneur. Do not leave alone like that—you might get cut down on the road, and that would be very painful to my feelings."

The legate gave a jump, which showed that if Duguesclin did not believe in his words, he believed, for his part, the words of Duguesclin.

In fact, the constable walking by the side of the mule which the sacristan led by the bridle, recon-

ducted the legate as far as the limits of the camp, without saying a word himself, but accompanied by such fierce gestures, such a terrible clashing of arms, and such threatening imprecations, that the legate thought his departure, although protected by the constable, much more alarming than his entry.

And so, once out of the camp, the legate gave the spur to his mule, as if he had feared that they were about to catch him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW HIS HOLINESS, POPE URBAN V., AT LAST DECIDED TO PAY THE CRUSADE AND BLESS THE CRUSADERS.

THE unhappy fugitive had not yet returned to Avignon, when Duguesclin, causing his troops to advance, completed the formation of that terrible circle which had so alarmed Urban V. when he had seen it from the summit of his terrace. In this movement, Villeneuve la Beguide and Gervasy were carried without any resistance, although there was in Villeneuve a garrison of five or six hundred men.

The constable had entrusted Hugh de Caverley with the execution of this manœuvre and the occupation of those towns.* He knew the manner in which his followers were accustomed to prepare their lodgings, and did not doubt the impression which such a commencement of a campaign would make on the people of Avignon.

In fact, that very evening the inhabitants of Avignon might see from their ramparts, the kindling of great fires, which sometimes took long in lighting, but which always ended by blazing-up splendidly. By-and-bye, when they had made out the precise points where these flames burst forth, they could discern that their houses were burning, and their olive trees serving as matches.

At the same time the English exchanged the wines of Châlons, Thorins, and Beaune, of which they had still a taste left, against those of Rivesaltes, Hermitage, and St. Peray, which appeared to them stronger and sweeter.

By the glare of all those fires, circling the town and lighting the English in their preparations for the night, the Pope assembled his council.

The cardinals were much at variance according to custom, and even more so than usual. Many were in favour of a redoubled severity, which should strike, not only the adventurers, but France with a salutary terror.

But the legate, in whose ears the various shouts of the excommunicated army still resounded, did not hide from his holiness and his council the impression which he had received.

The sacristan, for his part, was giving, in the Pope's kitchen, the recital of the perils which he had incurred in the company of M. le Légat, and which they had only escaped by their heroic bearing which had enforced respect on the English, the French, and the Bretons.

While the scullion was applauding the courage of the chorister, the cardinals were listening to the recital of the legate.

"I am ready to give my life in the holy father's service;" said this last, "for I may declare that I have already made that sacrifice, as my life has

* Query, villages or suburbs.—TRANSLATOR.

never been exposed to such risk as during my mission to the camp. I certify, also, that unless in virtue of a precise order from his holiness, who, in that case, would send me to martyrdom, a martyrdom to which I should go with joy, could I believe (but I do not believe it) that the faith would derive any encouragement from it, I would not return to those madmen without being the bearer of all their demands."

"We will see, we will see!" said the Pope, very agitated and extremely anxious.

"But, your holiness," said one of the cardinals: "we see already, and that very clearly."

"What do we see?"

"We see the flames of a dozen country houses, among which I can perfectly distinguish my own. And look, most holy father, at this very moment the roof is tumbling in."

"The fact is," said Urban, "that matters appear to have reached a crisis of urgency."

"And I, most holy father, who have in my cellars the vintages of the last six years! They say that the misbelievers do not even take the time to tap the butts, but that they drive them in, and drink in corresponding fashion."

"I," said a third, whose dwelling the train of fire was gradually approaching: "I am of opinion that an ambassador should be sent to the constable to pray him, in the church's name, to cause the instant cessation of the ravages which the soldiers are making on our lands."

"Will you take charge of the mission, my son?" asked the Pope.

"It would give me great pleasure, your holiness, but I am a very bad orator; and besides the constable does not know me, and it would be better, I think, to send him some face which he has seen already."

The Pope turned towards the legate.

"I ask for time to say my *in manus*,"* he replied.

"'Tis but just," said the Pope.

"But make haste!" said the cardinal, whose house was about to be burnt.

The legate arose, made the sign of the cross, and said—

"I am ready to go to martyrdom."

"I give you my blessing," said the Pope.

"But what shall I say to them?"

"Let them extinguish their fires and I will extinguish my wrath; let them cease to burn and I will cease to curse."

The legate shook his head like a man who has strong doubts of the success of his mission, but he did not the less seek for his faithful sacristan, who had scarcely finished the recital of his Iliad, when to his great terror he was obliged to undertake his Odyssey.

Both then left in the same equipment as the first time. The Pope wished to give them an escort of his soldiers, but these they positively refused; they were more fit to knit stockings when mounting guard, than to commit themselves with excommunicated persons.

The legate was, therefore, compelled to leave without them, besides he liked this almost as well. Alone with the sacristan, he might at least count on his weakness.

This time the legate, as he approached the camp, assumed a cheerful countenance; he had gathered a huge olive branch, to serve as a symbol

of peace, and from the first view which he got of the English, he shouted—

"Good news! good news!"

So that the English, who did not understand his language, but understood his gestures, did not receive him too ill; that the French, who understood him perfectly, remained in expectation; and that the Bretons, who understood him nearly, bowed on his passage.

This time the legate's return to the camp the more resembled a triumph, as, with a very great amount of good will, the conflagrations might be taken for bonfires of rejoicing.*

But when the poor ambassador had to announce to Duguesclin that he returned without bringing anything with him, save what he had promised on his first journey, that is—absolution, it was with tears in his eyes that he acquitted himself of his mission.

And the more so, as when he had done, Duguesclin looked at him in a way which seemed to say—

"And you have dared to return to make me such a proposition?"

And so, without further hesitation, the legate exclaimed—"Save my life M. le Connétable, save my life; for certainly when your soldiers know that I have returned to them with empty hands, I, who have announced to them good news, they will kill me."

"Humph!" said Duguesclin; "I won't say no, monseigneur."

"Alas! alas!" said the legate; "I had truly forewarned his holiness that he was sending me to martyrdom."

"I must confess," said the constable, "that they are not so much men as wehr-wolves. Excommunication has had an effect upon them which astonishes even me. I thought their hides were tougher, but truly, if before to-morrow they have not two or three golden crowns per man to plaster the wounds made by the church's thunderbolts, I can no longer answer for anything, and to-morrow they may be capable of burning Avignon; and in Avignon, I say it with horror, the cardinals, and with the cardinals, I shudder, the Pope himself."

"But as to myself," said the legate, "you understand M. le Connétable, that I must be the bearer of the answer you have just given; that they may adopt a decision which may avert such great misfortunes, and in order that they may know this reply and learn this decision, I must reach them safe and sound."

"Were you to arrive somewhat flayed," said Duguesclin, "the effect, in my opinion, would be somewhat increased. But," he speedily added, "we do not wish to constrain his holiness by violence; we wish that his decision should be the expression of his will, the result of his free election; I will, therefore, re-conduct you myself as I did the first time, and, for greater safety, will lead you out by a side issue."

"Ah! sire connétable," said the legate, "that is what I need! you are indeed a true Christian."

Duguesclin kept his word. The legate left the camp safe and sound; but behind him the pillage interrupted for an instant by the announcement he had made of good news, was renewed with redoubled fury.

It was but natural: disappointment had augmented anger.

* That is to commend his spirit to God. An idea perhaps too solemn to be treated with so much levity.—TRANSLATOR.

* The French term "*feu de joie*," is naturalised in English, but more for a military volley with blank cartridge than for a bonfire.

The wines were drunk, the furniture dispersed, the grain strewed on the ground.

The people of Avignon, always from their ramparts, for the bravest did not dare to leave the town, saw themselves thoroughly plundered and ruined.

The cardinals lamented their hard fate.

The Pope then sent to propose paying a hundred thousand crowns.

"You can bring them in any case, and we will see afterwards," answered Duguesclin.

The Pope assembled his council, and with the signs of grief deeply imprinted on his countenance, said, "My sons, we must consent to the sacrifice."

"Yes," said the cardinals with one voice: "for, as Ezekiel says, 'The enemy has entered our lands, he has laid waste our towns with fire and blood, and he has ravished our wives and our daughters.'"

"Let us sacrifice ourselves then," said Urban V., and already the treasurer awaited the order to open the coffers.

"They demand a hundred thousand crowns," said the Pope.

"We must give them," said the cardinals.

"Alas! yes," said his holiness.

And raising his eyes to heaven, he gave a deep sigh.

Then he called: "Angelo!"

The treasurer bowed.

"Angelo," continued the Pope, "you will go and promulgate through the town that I shall levy a contribution of one hundred thousand crowns,—you will not say at first whether of gold or silver, that will appear subsequently,—that I levy a contribution of one hundred thousand crowns on the unfortunate people."

"If complaints are made," continued the Pope, "you will relate what you have witnessed, that neither my prayers nor those of my cardinals have been able to save my well-beloved people from this extremity so painful to my heart."

The cardinals and the treasurer looked at the Pope with admiration.

"In fact," said the Pope, "these poor people are even very lucky at being able to redeem their houses and goods at so low a price. But in verity, in verity!" he added, with tears in his eyes, "nothing is so sad as for a prince to be thus compelled to give away his subjects' money."

"Which on any future occasion might have been so useful to your holiness," added the treasurer, with a bow.

"Finally—God wills it!" said the Pope.

And the contribution was raised with many murmurs when it was believed that only silver crowns were required, and not a little resistance when it was known they were to be of gold.

It was then that his holiness had recourse to his guards, and as they had no longer to deal with excommunicates but only with good Christians, they laid down their knitting needles and seized their pikes in such a martial manner, that the *Avignonnais* instantly returned to their duty.

At day-break, the legate, now no longer with his mule, but with ten richly caparisoned horses, wended his way towards the excommunicate camp.

But instead of finding Bertrand highly delighted, as he had expected, by the palpable and ringing proofs brought to him of the holy see's submission, he was surprised to see him quite sulky, turning and returning between his fingers a parchment with a newly-broken seal.

"Ah!" said the constable, shaking his head, "fine-money is this you bring me, Monseigneur le Légat."

"Is it not so?" answered the ambassador, who thought that money was always money, and therefore always good.

"Yes," continued Duguesclin, "but a scruple stops me; where does this money come from?"

"From his holiness, since it is his holiness who sends it you."

"Very good! but who has furnished it?"

"Truly! his holiness I presume."

"Pardon me, M. le Légat," said Duguesclin, "but a Churchman should not lie."

"Yet," said the legate, "I can testify—"

"Read that."

And Duguesclin handed to the legate the parchment which he had been rolling and unrolling between his fingers.

The legate took the parchment and read:

"Is it the intention of the noble knight, Duguesclin, that an innocent town, already heavily mulcted by its prince, should be further oppressed, that poor citizens already half-ruined, and artisans dying with hunger, should be deprived of their last mouthful of bread in order to defray a war waged from caprice? This question is put in the name of humanity to the most loyal of Christian knights, by the poor city of Avignon, which has just been sweated to blood, of a hundred thousand golden crowns, while his holiness keeps in the cellars of his palace two millions of crowns, without reckoning the treasures of Rome."

"Well," asked Bertrand angrily, when the legate had finished his perusal.

"Alas!" said the legate, "his holiness must have been betrayed."

"What is told, then, concerning these buried treasures is true?"

"It is so said."

"Then, Monseigneur le Légat," said the constable, "take back that gold; it is not the bread of the poor which is required by those who go to fight in God's cause, it is the superfluity of the wealthy. Listen well then to what I, Bertrand Duguesclin, constable of France, say to you: If the two hundred crowns of the Pope and cardinals are not here before the evening, I will burn this night, not the suburbs, not the town, but the palace, and with the palace the cardinals, and with the cardinals the Pope; so that of Pope, cardinals, and palace, not a vestige shall remain to-morrow morning. Depart, Monseigneur le Légat."

These noble words were saluted by a salvo of applause from soldiers, officers, and chiefs, which left no doubt in the legate's mind as to their unanimity of opinions, so that preserving silence amid these noisy acclamations, he retook with his loaded horses the road to Avignon.

"My children," said the constable to those of his soldiers who, being too remote, had heard nothing, and who were astonished at the shouts of their comrades, "these poor people had only a hundred thousand crowns to give us; it is too little, for it is just what I have promised to your leaders. The Pope will give us two hundred thousand."

In fact, three hours afterwards, twenty horses bending under their burden passed for good the barriers of Duguesclin's camp, and the legate, after making three heaps of the specie, one of a hundred thousand golden crowns, and two others of fifty thousand each, concluded by giving the pontifical benediction, to which the adventurers, who were good fellows enough when all their

wishes were complied with, replied by wishing him all manner of prosperity.

Then, when the legate had left:—

"Now," said Duguesclin to Hugh de Caverley, to Claude l'Ecorcheur, and to the Green Knight, "let us regulate our accounts."

"So be it," said the adventurers.

"I owe you fifty thousand golden crowns, being a crown for each soldier. Was it not so that our agreement ran?"

"It did so."

Bertrand attacked the larger heap. "Here are fifty thousand golden crowns," said he.

The adventurers counted after Bertrand Duguesclin, in virtue of that proverb, which was already in vogue during the fourteenth century—"Money deserves the trouble of being twice counted"

"Good," said they, "that is the portion of the soldiers; let us proceed to that of the officers."

Bertrand took from the same heap twenty thousand crowns.

"Four thousand officers," said he, "at five crowns per officer. Here: twenty thousand crowns. Is that your account?"

The chiefs began to pile up the coins.

"It is right," said they, after a brief interval.

"Good," said Duguesclin. "The chiefs' portion remains."

"Yes, that of the chiefs' remain," said Caverley, licking his lips, like a man anticipating a jovial feast.

"Now," said Bertrand, "ten chiefs at three thousand crowns each; is it not so?"

"It is what we agreed on."

"Here: thirty thousand crowns," said Bertrand, showing what remained of the larger heap of gold.

"The balance is there," said the adventurers, "nothing more need be said."

"So that you have no longer any objection to enter on the campaign?" asked Bertrand.

"None, and we are ready," answered Caverley. "Reserving, however, our oaths of fealty to the Prince of Wales."

"Yes," said Bertrand; "but those oaths only concern the English subjects."

"Well understood," replied the captain.

"All is now agreed on."

"And we are satisfied. But——"

"What?" asked Duguesclin.

"The hundred thousand crowns which remain?"

"You are leaders of too much foresight not to understand that an army about to take the field, requires a military chest."

"Doubtless," said Caverley.

"Well! fifty thousand crowns are destined for our general chest."

"Good!" said Caverley, to his companions, "I understand."

"And the fifty thousand more for the *private* chest."

"Ah! what a clever fellow!"

"Come here, sir chaplain," added Bertrand, "and let us draw up together a letter for our good lord, the King of France, to accompany the fifty thousand crowns which I am about to send him."

"Ah!" said Caverley, "that is very fine; for my part, I would not do as much even for the Prince of Wales himself."

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW MESSIRE HUGH DE CAVERLEY MISSET GAINING A HUNDRED THOUSAND GOLDEN CROWNS

It will be remembered that, in the garden scene we left Aïssa regaining her father's house, while Agénor disappeared on the other side of the wall.

Musaron had understood that nothing further existed to keep his master at Bordeaux; and therefore as soon as the young man had recovered from the reverie in which he had been plunged by the incidents which had just occurred, he found his horse ready saddled and his squire ready for departure.

Agénor vaulted into the saddle at a bound, then giving both spurs to his horse, he left the city at a gallop, followed by Musaron, who bantered him according to custom.

"Sir," said he, "we are getting away very quickly, I think. Where the devil have you put the treasure which you went to look for at the *infidel's*?"

Agénor shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply.

"Do not kill your good horse, master; we shall need it to make the campaign. He will not go long at that rate, I warn you; especially if, like Prince Henry of Transtamara, you have sewn up only fifty marks of gold in the lining of your saddle."

"In fact," said Agénor, "I think you are right. Fifty marks of gold and fifty marks of iron are too much for one beast."

And he let his lance, welded with steel, fall on the shoulders of the disrespectful squire.

Musaron's shoulders bent under the burden; and, as Agénor had for seen, his gaiety was considerably diminished by this increase of his load.

They crossed thus, keeping close on the track of Don Henry, but without overtaking him, Guienne and Béarn; and then crossing the Pyrenees, entered Spain through Arragon.

It was only in this province that they overtook the prince, whom they recognised by the flames of a small town which had been set on fire by Messire Hugh de Caverley.

It was thus that the companies marked their entry into Spain. Messire Hugh, like a lover of the picturesque, had chosen the town, which he intended as a Pharos, on an eminence, so that the flames might light for ten leagues round the country which was still unknown to him, and with which he desired to make acquaintance.

Henry was not surprised at this fancy of the English captain. He knew for long all the chiefs of the companies, and was acquainted with their method of proceeding. He begged, however, Messire Bertrand Duguesclin to interpose his authority with those under his orders, so that they might devastate as little as possible.

"For," said he, very judiciously, "as this kingdom is one day to belong to me, I like as well to have it in a good as in a ruined condition."

"Well, my lord, so be it," was Caverley's* reply; "but on one condition."

"What is that?" asked Henry.

"That your highness shall pay a duty for each house which is left intact, and for every woman who escapes violation."

"I do not understand!" said the prince, mastering the repugnance which the co-operation of such bandits caused him.

* The author here leaves too much to be understood, slipping from Duguesclin to Caverley without warning.—TRANSLATOR.

"Nothing, however," said Caverley, "can be said; since your towns when spared, and your population when doubled, must be worth money I should think."

"Well! so be it," said Henry, striving to smile. "We will talk of that ~~a~~ morrow morning; but in the mean time?"

"In the mean time, my lord, Arragon may sleep in peace. I can see clearly for all the night; and God be thanked, Hugh de Caverley has not the reputation of a prodigal."

On this promise—on which, however singular in its form, he might rely—Henry withdrew with Mauléon under his tent, while Caverley regained his own.

Messire Hugh de Caverley, instead of going to rest, as might have been expected after the fatigues of the day, listened to the sound of the retreating footsteps; then, when they were lost in the distance, he called for his secretary.

This secretary was a very important person in the brave captain's household; for whether this last knew not how to write, which is possible, or disdained to hold a pen, which is possible, it was the worthy scribe who was charged with the drawing up of all the transactions between the chief of adventurers and the prisoners from whom he extorted a ransom. Now few days passed over without the secretary of Messire Hugh de Caverley having some transaction of that kind to register.

The scribe came forward, a pen in one hand an inkstand in the other, and a roll of parchment under his arm.

"Come hither, Master Robert," said the captain, "and draw me up an acquittance with a safe conduct."

"An acquittance for what sum?" asked the clerk.

"Leave the sum in blank; but don't stint the space, for the sum is a round one."

"In whose name?" asked the scribe.

"Leave the name in blank as well as the sum."

"And is much room to be left here also?"

"Yes; for the name will be followed by not a few titles."

"Good, good!" said Master Robert, going to work with a speed which might make one believe that he was paid in proportion to the quantum of the receipt. "But where is the prisoner?"

"They are prepared for his capture."

The scribe knew the custom of his master; he did not hesitate an instant to complete the document. As the captain said they were prepared to capture the prisoner, he was already captured.

This opinion was not too complimentary to the captain, for scarcely had the document been completed when a noise gradually drawing nearer was heard in the direction of the mountain.

Caverley appeared rather to have guessed than to have heard this noise, for, before it had reached the watchful ears of the sentinel, the captain opened the entrance to his tent.

"Who goes there?" cried the sentinel almost immediately.

"Friends!" replied the well-known voice of Caverley's lieutenant.

"Yes, yes, friends," said the adventurer rubbing his hands together, "let them pass, and raise your pike as they come in. Those whom I expect are well worth the trouble."

At that moment, by the last flames of the expiring conflagration, a small troop of prisoners surrounded by twenty-five or thirty adventurers,

was seen advancing. This troop was composed of a knight who appeared at once in the strength and flower of his years, of a Moor, who held close to the curtains of a large litter, and of two attendants.

As soon as Caverley could discern that this troop really consisted of the persons just enumerated, he made all who were in his tent leave it, with the exception of his secretary.

Those whom he sent away left with a regret which they did not take the trouble to dissemble, and making calculations as to the value of the capture which had fallen into the claws of the bird of prey, whom they owned as their chieftain.

At the appearance of the four persons within the walls of his tent, Caverley bowed profoundly; then addressing the knight:—

"Sire," said he, "if, perchance, my followers have failed in courtesy towards your highness, pardon them; they did not know you."

"Sire!" repeated the prisoner, with an accent to which he sought to give the expression of surprise; but at the same time betraying his anxiety by his paleness, "is it me that you address, captain?"

"Yourself, sire, Don Pedro, the redoubtable sovereign of Castile and Murcia."

The knight from being pale, became livid. A desperate attempt to smile passed over his lips.

"Truly, captain," said he, "I am sorry for you; but you are much in error, if you take me for him whom you have just named."

"I'faith, your highness, I take you for what you are, and I truly think I have made a great prize."

"Believe what you please," said the knight, making a movement towards a seat, "it will not be difficult, I think, to make you alter your opinion."

"In order that I should change it, your highness, it would be needful that you should not be so imprudent as to walk about."

The knight clenched his fists.

"And why so?" he asked.

"Because your bones cack at every step you make, which is a very agreeable music for the poor leader of a company, into whose nets Providence has been so bountiful as to send a king."

"Is Don Pedro then the only person whose bones make that noise when he walks, and may not another man be subject to the same infirmity?"

"Truly," said Caverley, "the thing is possible, and you perplex me; but I have a certain means to ascertain my error, if it is as you say."

"What is it?" asked the knight, knitting his brow, and visibly annoyed by this colloquy.

"Prince Henry of Transtamara is but a hundred steps from here; I will send for him, and we will see if he recognises his beloved brother."

The knight in spite of himself showed signs of anger.

"Ah! you grow flushed!" said Caverley; "well confess, and if you confess, I swear to you on the honour of a captain that all shall pass between us two only, and that your brother shall not even know that I had the honour of conversing a few instants with your highness."

"Well, proceed: what is that you want?"

"I can want nothing as your highness can well understand, until I am thoroughly assured as to the identity of the person who is detained in my hands."

"Suppose, then, that I really am the king, and speak on."



"Plague on't! As you say that, sire, speak yourself! Do you think I have so little to say to you that it can be dispatched in two words? No; what is required, my lord, above all things, is a guard worthy of your highness!"

"A guard! You count then on detaining me a prisoner?"

"That, at least, is my intention."

"And I—I say to you that I will not remain here an hour longer, even should it cost me the half of my kingdom."

"Oh! it will cost you quite that, sire, and it will not be too much, since, in the position you are now in, you are nearly sure of losing all."

"Fix a price then!" exclaimed the prisoner.

"I will reflect, sire," said Caverley, coolly.

Don Pedro appeared to make a violent effort at self-control, and without replying a word, sat down against the canvas of the tent, turning his back on the captain.

Caverley appeared to reflect deeply; then, after a moment's silence—

"You can well afford to give me half a million of golden crowns, can you not?"

"You are stupid," replied the king. "They could not be found in all Spain."

"Three hundred thousand, then? I hope I am reasonable."

"Not the half," said the king.

"Then, my lord," replied Caverley, "I will write a word to your brother, Henry of Transtamara. He knows what royal ransoms are better than I do, and will fix the price of yours."

Don Pedro closed his fists, and the sweat might be seen bursting from under the roots of his hair and running down his cheeks.

Caverley turned towards his secretary: "Master Robert," said he, "go and invite, on my behalf, the prince, Don Henry of Transtamara, to join me under my tent."

The scribe walked to the outlet of the tent, but as he was about to cross it, Don Pedro rose up.

"I will give," he said, "the three hundred thousand golden crowns."

Caverley bounded with joy.

"But, as when I leave you I may fall into the hands of some other bandit of your description, who will ask another ransom from me, I demand from you a receipt and a safe conduct."

"And you, you will count down for me the three hundred thousand crowns?"

"Not so; for you understand that one cannot carry such a sum about with one; but you have, I dare say, among your men some Jew who knows the value of diamonds."

"I can tell that myself, sire," said Caverley.

"'Tis well. Hither, Mothril," said the king, making a sign to the Moor to come nearer. "You have heard?"

"Yes, sire," said Mothril, drawing from his loose pantaloons a long purse, through the rings of which glittered those wondrous sparkles which the king of precious stones borrows from the king of stars.

"Prepare the receipt," said Don Pedro.

"It is already drawn up," said the captain, "the sum only remains to be filled in."

"And the safe conduct?"

"It is below, already signed. I am too much your highness's servant to make you wait."

A convulsive smile passed over the king's lips. Then, approaching the table, he read:—

"I, the undersigned Hugh de Caverley, chief of the English adventurers—"

The king read not a word further; a flash as of lightning darted from his eyes.

"You are named Hugh de Caverley?" he said.

"Yes," replied the chief, astonished at the radiant expression, of which he in vain sought to divine the reason.

"And you are the chief of the English adventurers?" continued Don Pedro.

"Doubtless."

"An instant, then," said the king. "Mothril, replace those diamonds in your purse, and your purse in your pocket."

"Why so?"

"Because it is for me to give orders here, and not to receive them," exclaimed Don Pedro, drawing a parchment from his breast.

"Orders!" said Caverley, haughtily. "Learn, sire, that there is but one man in the world who has the right to give orders to Captain Hugh de Caverley."

"And that man's signature," replied Don Pedro, "is affixed to the bottom of this parchment. In the name of the Black Prince, Hugh de Caverley, I demand your obedience."

Caverley, shaking his head, cast a glance at the parchment unrolled in the king's hand; but scarcely had he seen the signature than he uttered a cry of rage, at which the officers who had remained outside the tent ran in.

The parchment which the prisoner presented to the chief of adventurers, was, in fact, the safe conduct given by the Black Prince to Don Pedro, with an order to all English subjects to obey him in all things, until the prince himself should arrive to take the command of the English army.

"I see," said Don Pedro, "that decidedly I shall get off more cheaply than you thought, or than I either. But be at ease my brave fellow, and I will compensate you."

"You are in the right, sire," said Caverley with

a sinister smile, which, through his lowered visor could not be discerned. "Not only you are free, but I wait to receive your orders."

"Well!" said Don Pedro, "order, then, as was your intention, Master Robert to go and look for my brother, Prince Henry of Transtamara, and to bring him hither."

The scribe consulted the captain by a glance, and, on an affirmative sign being made by Messire Hugh de Caverley, left the tent.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH WILL BE FOUND THE SEQUEL AND THE EXPLANATION OF THAT WHICH PRECEDES.

THIS is the manner in which those events occurred which have remained unknown to our readers, after the departure, or rather the flight of Agénor, consequent on the scene in the garden at Bordeaux.

Don Pedro had obtained from the Prince of Wales the protection which he needed to re-enter Spain, and sure of a reinforcement of men and money, had commenced his journey in company with Mothril, and provided with a safe conduct, which gave him power and safety amidst the bands of English adventurers.

The small troop had taken the direction of the frontier where, as we have said, the valiant Hugh de Caverley had spread his unavoidable net.

And yet, whatever might have been the chief's vigilance and the soldiers' address, it is probable that, thanks to the knowledge he had of the localities, the king, Don Pedro, might have passed along the frontier of Arragon, and reached New Castile without any accident, had not the following incident occurred:—

One evening, while the king was following with Mothril, on a large Cordova parchment containing a map of all Spain, the road which they were about to follow, the curtains of the litter were opened, and Aïssa's head glided through the aperture.

The young Moresca cast a glance at a slave lying near her litter, which intimated that he should approach her.

"Slave," she asked, "what is your country?"

"I was born," said he "on the other side of the sea, on the coast which looks towards Grenada, and which does not envy it."

"And you would wish to see your country again, would you not?"

"Yes," said the slave, with a deep sigh.

"To-morrow, if you will, you may be free."

"It is far from here to the Lake Laoudiah," said he, "and the fugitive would have died of hunger before he reached it."

"No; for the fugitive will carry with him this necklace of pearls, of which one would suffice to maintain him during all the journey."

And Aïssa unfastened her necklace, which she let fall into the slave's hand.

"And what must I do to gain at once liberty and this pearl necklace," said the slave, trembling with joy.

"You see," said Aïssa, "that greyish line which skirts the horizon: that is the Christian camp. What time would it take you to get there?"

"Before the nightingale has finished his song," said the slave, "I shall have reached it."

"Well, then, listen to what I am about to tell you, and engrave my words in the depths of your memory."

The slave listened with ecstatic ravishment.

"Take this note," continued Aïssa, "gain the camp, and once in the camp, inquire after a noble

French knight, a chief named the Count de Mauléon; cause yourself to be conducted to him, and give him this little bag, for which in his turn he will give you a hundred pieces of gold. Go!"

The slave seized the bag, hid it under his ride habiliments, chose the moment when one of the mules was straying into a neighbouring wood, and pretending to run after and catch it, disappeared in the wood with the swiftness of an arrow.

None remarked the disappearance of the slave save Aïssa, who followed him with her eyes, and who, palpitating with anxiety, only recovered her breath when he was quite out of sight.

What the young Moresca had foreseen happened. The slave was not long before meeting on the skirts of the underwood one of those birds of prey with steel claws, having a morion shaped like a beak, a flexible plumage of steel rings, and perched on a rock overlooking the briars, where he had taken post to get a more extended view.

The slave coming out of the brushwood much flurried, fell under the observation of the sentinel, who immediately levelled his crossbow at him.

The fugitive desired to be recognised. He made a sign that he wished to speak; the sentinel approached without lowering his crossbow. The slave then said that he was going to the Christian camp, and asked to be conducted to Mauléon.

This name, of which Aïssa exaggerated the importance, enjoyed, however, a certain notoriety among the companies, since the bold trait of Agénor, when he had been arrested by Caverley's band, and, above all, since it was known that to him was owing the co-operation of the constable.

The soldier uttered his rallying cry, took the slave by the wrist and led him to a second sentinel, placed about two hundred paces from him. This last in his turn conducted the slave to the second chain of vedettes, and thence to where Hugh de Caverley, in the centre of his troop, like a spider in the midst of his web, was seated in his tent.

Having understood by some movement which he could perceive around him, by some rumour which had reached his ears, that something new was taking place, he appeared at the entrance of his tent.

The slave being led directly to him, named the Bastard of Mauléon, the password which had served him till then.

"Who sends you?" asked Caverley of the slave, endeavouring to avoid an explanation.

"Are you the Seigneur de Mauléon?" asked the slave.

"I am his friend," answered Caverley, "and one of the dearest he has."

"It is not the same thing," said the slave; "I have orders to deliver to him only the letter of which I am the bearer."

"Listen," said Caverley; "the Seigneur de Mauléon is a brave Christian knight, who has numerous enemies among the Arabs and Moors, who have sworn to assassinate him. We have, therefore, sworn to allow none to enter his presence without having first acquainted ourselves with the message of which he is the bearer."

"Well," said the slave, seeing that all resistance would be useless, and believing besides that the captain had good intentions; "well! I am sent by Aïssa."

"What's Aïssa?" asked Caverley.

"The daughter of the noble Mothril."

"Ah! ah!" said the captain, "of the king, Don Pedro's counsellor?"

"Exactly."

"You see that the matter becomes more and more mysterious, and this message, doubtless, must contain something magical."

"Aïssa is not a magician," said the slave, shaking his head.

"No matter, I must read your note."

The slave cast a glance around him to see if flight were possible, but a great circle of adventurers had already closed around him. He drew Aïssa's bag from his breast and handed it to the captain.

"Read," said he; "you will see in it something which concerns myself."

The somewhat elastic conscience of Caverley did not need this invitation. He opened the bag, perfumed with benzoin and amber, and drew from it a square piece of white satin, on which, with a thickened ink, Aïssa's hand had traced the following words in Spanish:—

"My dear lord—I write to you according to my promise; the king, Don Pedro, and my father, are with me, ready to pass the defiles and enter Arragon; you may make at one blow our eternal happiness and your glory. Make them prisoners, and with them myself, who will be your gentle captive; if you wish to get a ransom from them they are rich enough to content your desire for gain; if you prefer glory to money and give them back their liberty for nothing, they have spirit enough to proclaim your generosity everywhere; but if you deliver them, you will, oh! my great lord, keep me, and I have a coffer full of rubies and emeralds, which would not disgrace a queen's diadem.

"Listen, then, and remember well what follows:— This night we commence our journey. Post your soldiers in the defile in such wise that we cannot traverse it without being seen. Our escort is at present weak, but from hour to hour it may become stronger, for six hundred men-at-arms whom the king was waiting for at Bordeaux, have been only prevented from rejoining us by the rapidity of our progress.

"You now see, my great lord, how Aïssa may become wholly yours, and without any being able to take her from you, since she will have been conquered by the strength of your victorious arm.

"One of our slaves is the bearer of this message; I have promised that you will liberate him, and give him a hundred pieces of gold—fulfil my wishes.—Your AÏSSA."

"Oh! oh!" thought Caverley, while emotion made the perspiration run down under his helmet, "a king. But what have I done them for some time, that fortune should send me such waifs and strays? A king! We must look after that, in the devil's name! But first, to get rid of this blockhead!"

"Then," said he, "the Seigneur de Mauléon owes you liberty?"

"Yes, captain, and a hundred pieces of gold."

Hugh de Caverley deemed no reply requisite to the second part of this demand. However, he called for his squire.

"Here!" said he; "take your horse, lead this man two good leagues distance from the camp, and there leave him. If he ask you for money, and you have too much, give him some. But I warn you, it will be pure liberality on your part. Go, my friend," he said to the slave, "your commission is performed. It is I who am the Seigneur de Mauléon."

The slave touched the ground with his fore-

head. "And the hundred pieces of gold?" he asked.

"My treasurer, whom you see," said Hugh de Caverley, pointing to the squire, "is ordered to pay them into your hands."

The slave arose, and followed in a joyful mood the person pointed out to him.

He was scarcely a hundred paces from the tent, when the captain sent a detachment into the mountain; and not disdaining to attend to those humble precautions himself, placed with his own hands, the sentinels in the defile, in such wise that no one could traverse it without being perceived, and having enjoined that no violence should be done the prisoners, he awaited the issue.

We have seen him in this expectation, and the event soon came to fulfil his desires. The king, impatient to continue his journey, wished to take the road without longer waiting. They were therefore surrounded in the ravine, greatly to the delight of Aïssa, who eagerly awaited the attack, which she believed was led by Mauléon. The measures taken by Caverley were besides so good, and the number of the English so great, that not one of Don Pedro's men made an effort in self-defence.

But Aïssa, who hoped to see Mauléon at the head of this ambuscade, soon began to feel anxious concerning his absence; she thought, however, that he acted thus from prudence, and that besides as the enterprise succeeded according to her wishes, that she should not yet despair of anything.

Now we shall be no longer astonished that the adventurer had so easily recognised Don Pedro, who, besides, was easy to recognise.

As to Mothrill and Aïssa, whose history he guessed with his extraordinary perspicuity, he was indeed a little alarmed at the anger which that discovery would excite in Mauléon, but he had almost instantly recollected that it was easy to lay all blame on the treachery of the slave, and that on the contrary he might make this abuse of confidence a title to Mauléon's gratitude; for while he intended to make Mothrill and the king pay their ransom, he proposed on the other hand to abandon Aïssa to the young man without claiming any compensation, and plumed himself beforehand on this piece of unwonted generosity.

It has already been seen how the exhibition by Don Pedro of the Prince of Wales's safe conduct changed the face of affairs, and overthrew the bold and skilfully projected plans of Caverley.

Don Pedro, after Robert's departure, had proceeded to relate to the chief of adventurers the circumstances of the treaty concluded at Bordeaux, when a great noise was heard. It was a clatter of horses' feet, a clash of armour, and of swords ringing by the side of men-at-arms.

Then the canvas of the tent was suddenly lifted, and the pale face of Henry de Transtamara, illumined by a sinister smile, was seen at the opening.

Mauléon behind the prince searched around for some one; he perceived the litter, and his eyes no longer left it. On Henry's arrival, Don Pedro drew back not less pale than his brother, seeking his absent sword at his side, and only appearing re-assured, when he had recoiled as far as one of the pillars of the tent, which supported a complete panoply, and had felt under his hand the cold steel of a battle axe.

Both looked at each other in silence for an instant, exchanging looks which crossed each

other threateningly, like flashes of lightning in a storm.

Henry was the first to break silence.

"I think," he said, with a gloomy smile, "that the war is now ended before it has begun."

"Ah! you think so," answered Don Pedro in a tone of sarcastic menace.

"I believe it so surely," answered Henry, "that I will ask, in the first place, the noble knight, Hugh de Caverley, what price he asks for a capture so important as that he has just effected; for had he taken twenty towns, and gained twenty battles, exploits which are largely rewarded, he would not have so many rights to our gratitude as by this single achievement."

"It is flattering to me," replied Don Pedro, playing with the handle of his axe, "to be rated at so high a value. Therefore courtesy for courtesy. Were you in the situation in which you think me, at how much, may I ask, would you rate your personal value, Don Henry?"

"I think he still presumes to jest," said Henry, with a fury which struggled with his joy, like the ice of the pole with the first beams of the sun.

"Let us see how all this will end," muttered Caverley, sitting down in order not to lose any detail of the scene, and beginning to enjoy the spectacle, rather as an amateur artist than a greedy speculator.

Henry turned round to his side; it might be seen that he was about to answer Don Pedro.

"Well!" said he, casting on Don Pedro a look laden with hate, "for that man, formerly a king, and who has now no longer on his forehead even the gilded reflection of his crown, I will give you, friend Caverley, either two hundred thousand golden crowns or two good cities, according to your choice."

"But," said Caverley, stroking with one hand the chin-piece of his helmet, while he continued through his closed visor to look at Don Pedro, "it seems to me that the offer is acceptable; although——"

This last replied to the interrogatory by a glance and gesture which signified: "Captain, my brother Henry is not generous, and I will make you a higher offer."

"Althou h!" replied Henry, repeating the last word of the chief of the adventurers. "What mean you, captain?"

Mauléon could no longer repress his curiosity.

"The captain means, no doubt," he remarked, "that he made other prisoners with Don Pedro, and that he wishes their value to be also fixed."

"I'faith! that is what I call reading in a man's thoughts," exclaimed Caverley; "and you are a brave knight, Sir Agénor. Yes, on my soul! I have made other prisoners, and even of very illustrious rank; but——"

And a new hesitation showed Caverley's irresolution.

"Their price shall be paid, captain," said Mauléon, boiling with impatience. "Where are they? In this litter, doubtless."

Henry laid his hand on the young man's arm, and gently held him back.

"Do you accept, Captain Caverley?" said he.

"It is for me to reply, sir," answered Don Pedro.

"Oh! do not pay the master here, Don Pedro; for you are no longer king," said Henry with disdain; "and wait till I speak to you before you reply."

Don Pedro smiled, and turning towards Caverley, said—

"Explain to him, captain, that you can't accept his offer."

Caverley passed his hand again over his visor, as if the iron had been his face, and drawing Agénor aside:

"My brave friend," he said, "good companions like ourselves owe each other truth; do they not?"

Agénor looked at him with astonishment.

"Well!" continued the captain, "if you will believe me, the best thing you can do is to leave by the little door of the tent which is behind you, and if you have a good horse, to spur him on till he can hold no longer."

"We are betrayed!" exclaimed Mauléon, suddenly enlightened. "To arms, prince, to arms!"

Henry eyed Mauléon with astonishment, but instinctively grasped the hilt of his sword.

Don Pedro, seeing that the drama was approaching its conclusion, exclaimed, extending his hand with a commanding gesture:—"Messire Hugh de Caverley, in the Prince of Wales's name, I enjoin you to arrest Prince Henry of Transtamara."

These words were scarcely finished, ere Henry had sword in hand; but Caverley opened his visor, raised a horn to his lips, and at its sound twenty adventurers flung themselves upon the prince, who was instantly disarmed.

"'Tis done," said Caverley to Don Pedro. "Now if you will believe me, sire, you had better retire; for blows will shower here very soon, I can answer for it."

"How so?" asked the king.

"That Frenchman who has left by the little door will not allow his prince to be taken, without striking off some arms or splitting some heads in his honour."

Don Pedro leant forward to the opening, and saw Agénor with his foot in the stirrup, doubtless to ride in search of succour.

The king seized a cross-bow, fixed it, placed the bolt, and levelled at the knight.

"David killed Goliath with a stone," said he; "it would be strange if Goliath could not kill David with a cross-bow."

"A moment," exclaimed Caverley, "a moment, sire, in the devil's name! You have only just come here, and you are about to upset every thing; and what would the constable say, if I allowed his friend to be killed?"

And he raised the end of the cross-bow with his arm at the moment Don Pedro laid his finger on the trigger. The bolt went into the air.

"The constable!" said Don Pedro, stamping with his foot; "it was well worth while to make me lose my shot from such a fear as that. Stretch your nets, hunter, and take this huge wild boar in them too; our chase will then be finished at a blow, and on that condition I can grant you forgiveness."

"You speak at your ease. Take the constable! mighty well! come and take the constable. Well, indeed!" he added, shrugging his shoulders, "what fine talkers these Spaniards are!"

"Messire Caverley."

"I only speak the truth. Take the constable!—I am not of a curious disposition, sire, but on the word of a captain, I should witness such an exploit with a great deal of interest."*

* It will not, I suppose, interfere with the interest of the romance to remind the reader of the difference between this and historical fact; for none go to historical romances for an account of the facts of history, but at most for the spirit and what may be termed the physiognomy of the

"There is one already taken," said Don Pedro pointing to Agénor, who was brought in a prisoner.

At the moment he was riding off at full gallop, one of the adventurers had ham-strung his charger with a bill-hook, and the horse had fallen, throwing its rider undermost.

So long as she had believed her lover far from the struggle and free from danger, Aïssa had neither spoken or stirred. One might have said that the events passing around her, important as they were, in no wise interested her; but on the approach of Mauléon, disarmed and in the hands of his enemies, the curtains of the litter were seen to open, and through them appeared the young girl's face, paler than the veil of white linen which wraps the women of the east.

Agénor uttered a cry. Aïssa sprung out of the litter and ran towards him.

"Oh! oh!" said Mothril, knitting his brow.

"What does this mean?" asked the king.

"The explanation seems forthcoming," muttered Caverley.

Henry of Transtamara cast on Agénor a dark and mistrustful glance, which the latter perfectly understood.

"You wish to speak," said he to Aïssa; "do so quickly and aloud, madam, for from the moment that we are your prisoners, to that of our death, there will probably be not much time to lose, even for the most ardent lovers."

"Our prisoners!" exclaimed Aïssa; "oh! it was not that which I wished, my great lord; very far otherwise."

Caverley's demeanour became very embarrassed. That man of iron almost trembled at the accusation which the two young lovers in his hands were about to bring against him.

"My letter," said Aïssa, to the young man; "did you not receive my letter?"

"What letter?" asked Agénor.

"Enough! enough!" said Mothril, all whose projects this scene was beginning to endanger. "Captain, the king orders you to lead Prince Henry of Transtamara to the king, Don Pedro's apartment, and that young man to mine."

"Caverley, you are a traitor!" roared Agénor, striving to get rid of the rude gauntlets which grasped his wrists.

"I told you to make your escape; you would not do so, or you escaped too late, which comes to the same thing," answered the captain. "By my faith, 'tis your own fault. And then why complain: you will lodge with her."

"Let us make good speed, gentlemen," said the king, "and let a council be assembled this very night to judge this bastard who calls himself my brother, and this rebel who pretends to be my king. Caverley, he had offered you two towns. I am more generous; I give you a province. Mothril, order my people to come up; we must, in an

times, which they often give far more faithfully than history itself. Duguesclin was really ransomed from captivity to lead this expedition. He was taken prisoner at the battle of Auray fought in 1364, between Charles de Blois, the French claimant of the dukedom of Brittany and Jean de Montfort, the claimant supported by England. Bertrand Duguesclin, with a thousand men-at-arms, acted as an auxiliary to Charles, while John, Lord Chandos, with an English force, aided the strength of Montfort. The leader of the English rearguard was Sir Hugh de Calverley, who, however, appears to have little in common but the name with the character in this romance. Charles de Blois was defeated and killed, and Duguesclin fell into the hands of Chandos, from whom he was ransomed by Charles V for a hundred thousand golden crowns. Notwithstanding this war in Brittany, France and England were at peace at the time.—TRANSLATOR.

hour's time be under shelter in some good castle."

Mothril bowed and went out; but he had not made ten steps beyond the tent, when he suddenly fell back, making that sign with the hand which, with every nation, enjoins silence.

"What is there now?" asked Caverley, with ill-disguised anxiety.

"Speak, good Mothril," said Don Pedro.

"Listen," said the Moor.

All the senses of the assistants seemed to pass into their ears, and, for an instant, the tent of the English chief wore the appearance of an assembly of statues.

"Do you hear?" continued the Moor, stooping nearer and nearer to the earth.

In fact, one might hear something resembling the sound of thunder, or the approaching gallop of a troop of horsemen.

"Nôtre Dame—Guesclin," suddenly cried a firm and sonorous voice.

"Ah! ah! the constable," muttered Caverley, who recognised the war-cry of the stout Breton.

"Ah! ah! the constable," said Don Pedro, in his turn, knitting his brow.

For though he had never yet heard it, he recognised the terrible cry.

The prisoners, on their part, exchanged looks, and a smile of hope passed over their lips.

Mothril drew near his daughter, and clasped her waist more closely in his arms.

"Sire" said Caverley, with that bantering air which never left him, even in the moment of danger, "you wished to take the wild boar; he is coming to spare you the trouble."

Don Pedro made a sign to the men-at-arms, who drew up close behind him. Caverley, determined on remaining neuter between his former companion and his new leader, withdrew to a distance.

A new rank of guards came to treble the iron circle which held the prince and Mauléon.

"What are you doing, Caverley?" asked Don Pedro.

"I give place to you as to my king and leader, sire," answered the captain.

"'Tis well," said Don Pedro; "then let me be obeyed."

The horses stopped; the clash of iron was heard, and the noise of a man laden with the weight of armour, jumping to the ground.

Almost immediately afterwards Bertrand Duguesclin entered the tent.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WILD BOAR TAKEN IN THE NET.

BEHIND the constable came, with a cunning eye and a smile on his lips, the honest Musaron, covered from head to foot with dust.

He seemed to have come to give the explanation to those present of this surprising arrival of the constable.

Bertrand raised his visor on coming in, and ran through the assembly with a single look.

On perceiving Don Pedro, he bowed slightly; on discovering Henry of Transtamara, he gave a respectful salute; then going to Caverley, he took his hand.

"Good day, sir captain," he calmly said; "it appears we have made a good capture! Ah, Messire d'Mauléon, you will excuse me, I had not observed you."

Those words, which appeared to betray so total an ignorance of the state of the case, struck the majority of those present with astonishment.

But Bertrand, far from being disconcerted at this almost solemn silence, continued:

"I farther hope, Captain Caverley, that all the attention due to his rank and his misfortunes have been paid the prisoner?"

Henry was about to rejoin, but Don Pedro spoke first:

"Yes, seigneur connétable, be re-assured; we have had for the prisoner all that respect which the right of nations enjoins."

"You have had," said Bertrand, with an expression of surprise, which would have done honour to the most skilful comedian; "you have had! How can you say that, may it please your highness?"

"Yes, messire connétable," resumed Don Pedro with a smile, "I repeat it, we have had."

Bertrand looked at Caverley, who remained impassible under his steel armour.

"I do not understand," said he.

"My dear constable," said Henry, rising with difficulty from his seat (for he had been bruised and bound by the soldiers, and in the struggle many of them, cuirassed men, had half-stifled him in their iron arms), "dear constable, the assassin of Don Frederick is right, it is he who is our master, and we who, through treason, have become his prisoners."

"Hum!" said Bertrand, turning round with a look of such menace that more than one face in the assembly grew pale. "Treason, say you, and where, then, is the traitor?"

"My lord constable," replied Caverley, stepping forward, "it appears to me that the word treason is inappropriate, and that you should rather have said fidelity."

"Fidelity!" repeated the constable, whose astonishment seemed to increase.

"Doubtless, fidelity," continued Caverley, "for after all, we are English,* are we not? and consequently subject to the orders of the Prince of Wales."

"Well, and what then?" said Bertrand, expanding his broad shoulders, as if to draw breath, and letting his heavy iron mailed hand fall on the hilt of his sword—"Who denies, my dear Caverley, that you are subject to the Prince of Wales?"

"Then, my lord, you must admit, for no one knows better than yourself the rules of discipline, that it was my duty to obey my prince's orders."

"And those orders are here," said Don Pedro, extending his parchment towards Bertrand.

"I don't know how to read," said the constable gruffly.

* As I have previously remarked, M. A. Dumas avails himself of the license of romance in his treatment of history. It is not more, indeed, than has been done by many other writers, less than by some writing for the express purpose of instruction, not amusement. It was not until after Don Pedro had been dethroned by Henry de Transtamara at the head of the companies under the command of Duguesclin and by the revolt of his own subjects, that he sought the protection of the Prince of Wales. Those leaders of the companies who owed allegiance to England had been dissuaded by Edward from embarking on the enterprise, but they paid him no attention. After Pedro, however, had sought refuge at Bordeaux, and Edward had determined to support him, he recalled all the English and Gascon adventurers from Henry's service to his own, and this call they obeyed. In a romance, however, to enlarge the canvass so as to admit three successive invasions of Spain, would clearly have been all but impracticable, and unless historical romance were prohibited, some liberty must be given to the novelist to modify events for his purpose. — TRANSLATOR.

Don Pedro drew back his parchment; and Caverley, brave as he was, trembled.

"Well," continued Duguesclin: "I think I now understand. The king, Don Pedro, had been taken by Captain Caverley. He has shown the safe conduct of the Prince of Wales, and the captain has forthwith restored Don Pedro to liberty."

"Just so," exclaimed Caverley, who hoped that in his extreme good faith, Duguesclin would approve of all that had been done.

"Nothing better, so far," continued the constable.

Caverley breathed more freely.

"But," resumed Bertrand, "there is still a matter which to me remains in obscurity."

"What is it?" asked Don Pedro, haughtily. "Make haste, Messire Bertrand, for your inquiries become tiresome?"

"I shall conclude," replied the constable, with his terrible *sang-froid*. "But where is the need that Captain Caverley, to deliver Don Pedro, should make Don Henry a prisoner?"

At these words, and at the attitude which Bertrand Duguesclin took as he pronounced them, Mothril judged that the moment had come for calling a reinforcement of Moors and Englishmen to Don Pedro's assistance.

Bertrand moved not a muscle of his countenance, and appeared even not to perceive the manœuvre. His voice, if possible, became calmer and colder than before.

"I await a reply," said he.

It was Don Pedro who gave it.

"I am astonished," said he, "that the French knights should be so ignorant as not to know that there is a double profit in making a friend, at the same time as we get rid of an enemy."

"Are you of that opinion, master Caverley?" asked Bertrand, fixing on the captain a look, the serenity of which was at once a testimony of strength, and a gaze of defiance.

"Needs must, messire," answered the captain. "I must obey orders."

"Well, for my part," said Bertrand, "I, on the other hand, command, I order you, then, mark me well, to set at liberty his Highness Prince Henry of Transtamara, whom I see there guarded by your soldiers; and as I am more courteous than you, I will not require that you should arrest Don Pedro, although I have the right to do so, since you have my money in your pocket, and that as I pay you, I am your master."

Caverley made a movement; Don Pedro stretched out his arm.

"Make no reply, captain," said he; "there is here only one master, and that master is myself. You will therefore obey me, and that on the spot, if you please. Bastard Don Henry, Messire Bertrand, and you, Count de Mauléon, I declare you all three my prisoners."

At these terrible words, all became silent in the tent. Amidst this silence, six men-at-arms, on a gesture from Don Pedro, broke from the rest, to secure the person of Duguesclin, as had been already done with that of Don Henry; but the good knight, with a blow of his fist, that fist with which he could drive in armour, felled the first who came forward, and then with his powerful voice thundering out his cry of *Nôtre Dame—Guesclin*, so that it resounded afar throughout the plain, he drew his sword.

In an instant the tent exhibited a scene of terrible confusion. Agénor, who was ill guarded, had with a single effort shaken off the two soldiers

placed to watch him, and had come to join Duguesclin; Henry was cutting with his teeth the last cord which bound his wrists. Mothril, Don Pedro, and the Moors presented a threatening attitude.

Aïssa passed her head through the curtains of her litter, crying out, forgetful of all, save her lover,

"Courage! my great lord! courage!"

Lastly, Caverley had withdrawn, taking his English with him, so as to preserve neutrality as long as possible; only to be ready for all events, he had the call to saddle sounded.

The combat was engaged. Arrows, crossbolts, leaden balls hurled by the sling, began to hurtle through the air and rain on the three knights, when suddenly a tremendous clamour arose and a troop of men-at-arms entered the tent on horseback, cutting down, driving and crushing all before them, and raising such clouds of dust as overwhelmed the most furious combatants,

By their cries "*Guesclin! Guesclin!*" it was easy to recognise the Bretons commanded by the Bègue de Vilaines, Bertrand's inseparable friend, and posted by him at the barriers with injunctions to charge only when he should hear the cry of "*Nôtre Dame—Guesclin!*"

There was an instant of strange confusion in this ripped-up and overthrown tent, an instant during which friends and enemies were mixed, confounded and blinded; then this dust was dispersed, and as the first rays of the sun rose over the mountains of Castile, the Bretons were seen masters of the field of battle. Don Pedro, Mothril, Aïssa, the Moors had disappeared like a vision. Some struck by maces and swords, remained on the ground, writhing in their blood, as if to prove that it was not merely an army of fleeting phantoms they had to deal with.

Agénor at once recognised their disappearance; he jumped on the first horse that came to hand, and without perceiving that the animal was wounded, galloped to the nearest eminence, whence he could command the plain. When he reached it, he saw afar off, five Arab horses entering the wood, and through the blue atmosphere of the morning, caught a glimpse of Aïssa's woollen robe and floating veil. Without caring whether he was followed, and moved by a senseless hope, he urged his horse in pursuit; but ere ten paces were completed, the horse sank to rise no longer.

The young man returned to the litter, it was empty, he only found there a bunch of roses still damp with tears.

At the extremity of the lines all the English cavalry awaited in good order for Caverley's signal to action. The captain had disposed his men so skilfully that they enclosed the Bretons in a circle.

Bertrand saw at a glance that the object of this manœuvre was to cut off his retreat.

Caverley came forward.

"Messire Bertrand," said he, "to prove to you that we are trusty comrades, we are about to open our ranks that you may regain your quarters. That will show you that the English are true to their word, and that they respect the chivalry of the French king."

Meanwhile Bertrand, as silent and calm as if nothing extraordinary was occurring, had mounted his horse, and taken his lance from his squire's hand.

He looked round him and saw that Agénor had done the same.

All his Bretons remained behind him in good order and ready for the charge.

"Sir Englishman," said he, "you are a rogue,

and, had I the power, I would have you hung on the chesnut-tree hard-by."

"Ah, ah! messire connétable," said Caverley, "have a care. You will force me to make you a prisoner in the Prince of Wales's name."

"Bah!" said Duguesclin.

Caverley understood the threat implied in the taunting interjection of the constable, and turning towards his soldiers.

"Close your ranks," cried he to his men, who drew together, and offered to the Bretons a wall of iron.

"My children," said Bertrand to his brave fellows, "our breakfast time is near; our tents are in that quarter; let us return home."

And he spurred his horse with such a will, that Caverley had barely time to get aside and avoid the iron hurricane which passed by him.

In fact, after Bertrand rushed on with equal vigour, the Bretons, led by Agénor, Henry de Transtamara, almost in spite of himself, had been placed in the centre of the little troop.

At this time one man by knowledge of arms and personal strength might be a match for twenty. Bertrand pointed his lance so as to overthrow the Englishman in his front. This first opening being effected, a loud tumult was heard of broken lances, cries of the wounded, heavy blows struck by iron maces, and the neighings of horses crushed by the shock.

When Caverley turned round he saw a large and bloody opening; then five hundred paces further, the Bretons galloping in as good order, as if they had crossed only a field of standing corn.*

"I had, however quite resolved," he muttered, shaking his head, "not to adventure myself against those brutes. Boasts and boasters may go to the devil! I lose in this piece of business twelve horses and four men, without counting, unlucky dog that I am, a king's ransom. Let us decamp, gentlemen. From this day forth we are Castilians. Let us change our banner."

And the adventurer, that very day, raised his camp, and began his march to rejoin Don Pedro.

* To represent a troop of Breton horsemen riding over an army of English, as they would over a field of standing corn, to give themselves an appetite for breakfast, is surely paying too great a tribute to the national vanity of some silly readers. The Breton military character was, however, high at that time, which the French was not, but it was not so high as the English. In 1360, Edward III., landing at Calais, marched through all the northern provinces of France up to the gates of Paris, thence into Champagne and Burgundy, and from Burgundy along the course of the Loire into Poitou, without any French army taking the field against him during his progress. It is curious to see how, with the growth of England's commercial and maritime dominion, its military power has decreased. The largest forces brought to act in a body on the continent during the last war, little exceeded the contingents furnished by Westphalia, Bavaria, or other fifth-rate German powers to the armies of Napoleon or the allies. The very idea of making any head singly against the military power of France on the continent would be looked upon and justly, considering present circumstances, as a sort of insanity; and, more than that, few but the very sanguine can doubt that with the present military defences of England, a very moderate French army, only once across the channel, might traverse and lay waste the country almost as effectually as William the Norman after Hastings. The English laugh at the supineness of individuals who neglect their personal interests, but they do not appear to perceive that a great nation, neglecting ordinary precautions of safety, is quite as supine and infinitely more culpable.—TRANSLATOR.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE POLICY OF MESSIRE BERTRAND DUGUESCLIN.

It was already many hours since the Bretons and Prince Henry of Transtamara had been in safety with Mauléon, and it was already long since Agénor had, in the windings of the mountain, lost sight of that white point flying through the plain, which now glittered in the rays of the sun, and which was nothing else than the vanishing disappearance of all his love, all his joy, and all his hope.

It was a somewhat varied spectacle which was presented by the attitude of the different personages of this history, for chance seemed to take pleasure in grouping them all together within the frame of the magnificent landscape on which Agénor was gazing.

The little band of fugitives had now re-appeared on one of the slopes of the mountain which it had gained by a flight, which that of an eagle could scarcely have outstripped in swiftness. Three things might be distinctly perceived: Mothril's red mantle, Aïssa's white veil, and the luminous point, which the sun caused to glitter on the steel helmet of Don Pedro.

In the interval between the foreground and the distance, the troop of Caverley re-formed in order of battle, was following the road to the mountain. The first horsemen were disappearing in the woods which lay extended at its base.

In the foreground, Henry of Transtamara, leaning against a gigantic tuft of broom, allowed his horse to wander on the meadow, looking from time to time at his wrists, still reddened by the pressure of the cords. These vestiges of the frightful scene which had just passed in Caverley's tent, alone reminded him that two hours previously Don Pedro was in his power, and that fortune had only smiled on him for an instant to precipitate him almost immediately from the summit of a premature prosperity, to the lowest depths, perhaps, of the dark abyss of uncertainty and impotency.

Near Henry, some Bretons, worn out with fatigue, had lain down on the grass. These brave knights, obedient machines, raised by the order of nature alone above the beast of burden, or the shepherd's dog, did not take the trouble of reflecting after acting. Only, as they had remarked that ten paces off, Bertrand was reflecting for them, they had drawn their mantles over their faces to keep off the sun, and had gone to sleep.

The Bègue de Vilaines and Olivier de Mauny did not sleep; they were looking, on the contrary, with the most intense and prolonged attention at the English, whose advanced guard, as we have already said, was disappearing in the wood, while the rear guard was occupied in pulling down the tents, and in packing them on mules' backs. In the midst of the workers, Caverley might be seen crossing like an armed phantom the ranks of his soldiers, and watching over the execution of the orders he had given.

Thus, all these men, scattered through one vast landscape, and flying some to the south, some to the west, some to the east, and some to the north, like frightened ants, were yet all united by one sentiment, and God, who alone understood them, as he looked on them from the height of heaven, might say that in each of those hearts, with the exception of the heart of Aïssa, the sentiment which prevailed over all others, was that of vengeance.



But Mothril, Don Pedro, and Aïssa were soon lost again in a turning of the mountain; the English rear-guard was soon again on the march, and plunged into the wood, so that Mauléon, no longer seeing Aïssa; and the Bègue de Vilaines and Olivier de Mauny, no longer seeing Caverley, came near to Bertrand, who had shaken off his reverie to approach Henry, still buried in his own.

Bertrand gave them a smile; then rising up, which from the iron joints of his armour was a matter of some difficulty, from the little knoll on which he was seated, he walked straight to Prince Henry, who was still leaning against his tuft of broom.

The noise of his steps,* rendered weighty by

his armour, shook the ground, and yet Henry did not turn round.

Bertrand continued to advance until his shadow interposing between the prince and the sun, took from the melancholy nobleman that sweet consolation of the warmth of heaven which, like life, is never so precious, as when one is losing it.

Henry raised his head to claim the restoration of his sun, and saw the good constable leaning on his sword, his visor half raised, and his eye beaming with an encouraging compassion.

"Ah! constable," said the prince, shaking his head, "what a day!"

"Bah! my lord," answered Bertrand, "I have seen worse."

The prince only replied by an accusing look to heaven.

"I'faith!" continued Bertrand. "There is but one thing that I can remember, that we might

* How can the noise of any man's steps shake the ground, or any thing else? Weight would be the proper phrase.

have been prisoners, and that on the contrary we are free."

"Ah! constable, do you not see that everything escapes us?"

"What mean you by everything?"

"The King of Castile! by St. James!" exclaimed Don Henry, with a gesture of rage and menace, which made the knights drawn to the spot by the resounding voice of the prince, and who, while they listened, could not forget that this abhorred enemy was a brother, shudder as they beheld it.

Bertrand had not come up to the prince with the mere object of lessening the distance which separated them: he had something to tell him; he had, in fact, surprised on the faces of all, an expression of fatigue which somewhat resembled a beginning of discouragement.

He made a sign to the prince to sit down. The latter understood that Bertrand was about to begin some important conversation: he lay down, and amidst all these faces, expressing discouragement, as we have already said, his own was not the least expressive.

Bertrand bent forward leaning his hands on the pommel of his sword.

"Forgive me, my lord," said he, "if I distract your thoughts from the road they were following; but there is a point on which I desire to come to an understanding with you."

"What is it, my dear constable?" asked Henry, somewhat disturbed at this preamble, for to accomplish the gigantic undertaking of his usurpation he could only rely on the trustiness of the Bretons, and there are some minds which in matters of that nature, cannot have a very vigorous faith.

"You have just said, my lord, that the King of Castile had escaped."

"Without doubt, I have said so."

"Well, that contains an ambiguity, my lord, and I advise you to relieve your faithful servants from the doubt in which your words have plunged them. There is, then, besides yourself another King of Castile?"

Henry raised his head like a bull who has felt the picador's lance.

"Explain yourself, my dear constable," he replied.

"'Tis easy. If you and I know not what to think on that subject, you will readily understand that my Bretons and your Castilians will be still more perplexed, and that the remaining population of Spain, still less informed on the subject, will never know whether they ought to cry, 'God save King Henry! or God save King Pedro.'"

Henry listened, but without yet perceiving what the constable was aiming at. But as the reasoning appeared to him very conclusive, he gave an approving nod with his head.

"Well, then?" said he.

"Well, then," pursued Duguesclin, "if there are two kings, which produces confusion, let us begin by dethroning one of them."

"But it seems to me that we are making war for that very purpose, sir constable," answered Henry.

"Very well; but as yet we have not gained one of those decisive battles which at one blow hurls a king from his throne; and while we await that day, which is to decide the fate of Castile, it seems that you do not yet know whether or not you are king."

"It matters not, if I wish to become so."

"Then be so."

"But, my dear constable, am I not already in your eyes the true and only monarch?"

"That is not enough; you must be so, for all the world."

"That, messire, appears to me impossible, before the gain of a battle, the adhesion of an army, or the capture of some important town."

"Well! that, my prince, is what I have thought on!"

"You!"

"Doubtless, I! Do you imagine that, because I can fight, I am unable to think? Undeceive yourself. I am not always fighting, and sometimes I think. You say that you must await the gain of a battle, the acclamation of an army, or the capture of an important town?"

"Yes, or one of those things at least."

"Well! let us have one of them forthwith."

"That appears to me difficult, sir constable, if not impossible."

"Why so, sire?"

"Because I fear."

"Ah! if you fear, I, my prince, fear nothing," replied the constable, with animation; "if you will not do it, I will."

"We shall fall from too great a height, sir constable; so great that we shall not be able to rise again."

"Unless, prince, you fall into your grave, you will always be able to rise again, so long as you have four Breton knights to stand by you, and that glittering Castilian sword at your side. Be resolved, sire, I beg."

"Oh! be assured, sir constable, that I shall not be wanting when the occasion comes," answered Henry, whose eyes grew brighter at the contemplation of a nearer fulfilment to his dream. "But as yet I see neither the battle nor the army."

"No, but you see the town."

Henry looked round him.

"Where are the kings of this country crowned, my prince?" asked Duguesclin.

"At Burgos."

"Then, though my geographical knowledge be slender, I believe that we are now in the neighbourhood of Burgos."

"No doubt; it is at most twenty or twenty-five leagues from here."

"Then, let us have Burgos."

"Burgos!" repeated Henry.

"No doubt, Burgos. And if you desire to possess it, I will give it you as sure as my name's Duguesclin."

"A town of such strength, sir constable," answered Henry, shaking his head doubtingly; "a capital town!—a town in which, besides the nobility, we find a powerful body of burghers, composed of Christians, Jews, and Mahometans, all divided in ordinary times, but all friends when the defence of their privileges is concerned. Burgos, the key, in a word, of Castile, and which has been chosen as an impregnable sanctuary by those who have deposited there the crown and the royal insignia!"

"It is there, your highness, that we will go, if you please," said Duguesclin, quietly.

"My friend," said the prince, "do not allow yourself to be carried away by a sentiment of affection, by an overstrained devotion. Let us consult our strength."

"To horse! sire," said Bertrand, seizing the bridle of the prince's horse, which was straying among the broom; "to horse, and let us march straight on Burgos."

And on a sign from the constable, a Breton

trumpet gave the signal. The sleepers were the first in the saddle, and Bertrand, who looked on his Bretons with the attention of a chief, and the affection of a father, remarked that most of them, instead of surrounding the prince, as was their custom, preferred uniting round the constable, recognising him as their true and only leader.

"It was time," muttered the constable leaning towards Agénor's ear.

"Time for what?" asked he, trembling like a man awakened from a dream.

"Time to refresh the activity of our soldiers."

"There's no harm in it, truly, constable," replied the young man; "for it is hard for men to go they know not where, to fight for they know not whom."

Bertrand smiled; Agénor gave him back his own thought, and thus showed him to be in the right.

"It is not for yourself that you speak, I suppose?" asked Bertrand; "for I think I have always seen you the first, whether in march or battle, for the honour of our country."

"Oh! for my part, messire, I only ask to fight, or, above all, to march, and none will ever go quick enough for me."

And as he thus spoke, Agénor rose on his stirrups as if he wished to look over the mountains which skirted the horizon.

Bertrand made no reply; he had well judged his men. But he consulted a guard, who assured him that the shortest road to Burgos was to go first to Calahorra, a little town scarcely six leagues distant.

"Let us go, then, quickly, to Calahorra," said the constable.

And he spurred his horse, thus setting an example of haste.

Behind him broke forward, with a formidable clatter, the iron squadron, in the centre of which was Henry of Transtamara.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MESSENGER.

It was towards the end of the second day's march that the little town of Calahorra appeared in sight to the troop commanded by Henry of Transtamara and Bertrand Duguesclin. This body of men, which during its two days' march had been strengthened by all the little detachments scattered in the environs, might amount to about ten thousand men.

The attempt which was about to be made on Calahorra, the advanced sentinel of Burgos, was one of a decisive character. In fact, from this starting point, which would afford a test of the sentiments of old Castile, depended the success or failure of the enterprise. If stopped before Calahorra, Don Henry's march would become a war; if Calahorra were passed through without resistance, Henry would advance on a career of triumph.

The army further was very well disposed; the general opinion was that Don Pedro had gone to rejoin on the other side of the mountains, a body of Arragonese* and Moorish troops, of whom intelligence had been received.

The gates of the town were shut, the soldiers who guarded them, were at their posts; the sentinels, cross-bow on shoulder, went their rounds

* This is not conformable to history, as Peter the Ceremonious, King of Arragon, was the ally of Henry, in his attempt on the throne of Castile.—TRANSLATOR.

on the wall; all was in a state, if not of menace, at least of defence.

Duguesclin led his little army to within a bow-shot from the ramparts. There by sound of trumpet, he rallied the army round their colours, and pronounced a discourse, full of the assurance of his country, and of the address of a man reared in the court of Charles V., which he concluded by proclaiming Henry of Transtamara king of the two Castiles, of Seville, and of Léon; instead of Don Pedro, an unworthy knight, and a sacrilegious murderer.

These solemn words which Bertrand gave out with the full strength of his lungs, made ten thousand swords leap from the scabbard, and under the most beautiful of skies, at the hour, when the sun was about to sink behind the mountains of Navarre, Calahorra, from the height of its ramparts, might witness the imposing spectacle of the fall and resurrection of a throne.

Bertrand, after having spoken himself and allowed the army to speak, turned to the town to ask its opinion.

The burghers of Calahorra, however closed in, however well provided with arms and provisions, did not long remain in doubt.

The constable's attitude was full of meaning. That of his men-at-arms, with their raised lances, was not less so. They probably reflected that the very weight of that cavalry might suffice to overthrow their wall, and that it was better to ward off that misfortune by opening their gates. They therefore replied to the acclamations of the army, by an enthusiastic shout of "Long live Don Henry of Transtamara, King of Castile, of Seville, and of Léon."

These shouts, the first uttered in the Castilian language, deeply moved Don Henry; he raised the visor of his helmet, and advanced unattended to the walls.

"Say 'God save the good King Henry,'" he cried, "for I shall be so good to Calahorra as to make her always remember, that she was the first to hail me as King of the Castiles."

It was now no longer enthusiasm, but frenzy; the gates opened as if a fairy had touched them with her wand, and a compact mass of citizens, women, and children, rushed out of the town, and mixed with the royal forces.

In an hour, one of those splendid fêtes was organised, of which nature furnishes the material; all the flowers, wine, and honey of that rich country; psalteries, dulcimers, women's voices, wax candles, the sound of bells, the chaunting of priests, regaled the new king and his companions during the entire night.

In the meantime Bertrand had assembled his council of Breton officers, and was saying to them,—

"Prince Don Henry, of Transtamara, is now a proclaimed, though not yet an anointed king; you are no longer the supporters of an adventurer but of a prince who possesses lands, fiefs, and titles. I would wager that Caverley will regret that he is no longer with us."

Then amidst the attention which was always granted to him, not only as a leader, but also as a warrior no less prudent than brave, and as brave as he was experienced, he laid before his auditors all his system; that is, all his hopes, which soon became theirs also.

He was concluding his discourse, when it was announced that the prince was waiting for him as well as for the Breton chiefs, and that he was waiting for his faithful allies in the palace of the gover-

nor of Calahorra, placed by that officer at the new sovereign's disposal.

Bertrand immediately complied with the invitation. Henry was already seated on a throne, and a golden circlet, the badge of royalty, adorned the crest of his helmet.

"Messire Connétable," said the prince, holding out his hand to Duguesclin, "you have made me king, I make you a count; **you** give me an empire, I offer you a domain; thanks to you, I am entitled Henry of Transtamara, King of Castile, of Seville, and of Léon; you, thanks to me, are called Bertrand Duguesclin, Constable of France and Count of Borgia."

Immediately, three rounds of cheers from chiefs and soldiers proved to the king that he had performed an act not only of gratitude but of justice.

"As to you, noble captains," continued the king, "my presents will not reach the amount of your deserts, but your conquests, aggrandising my states and augmenting my wealth, will render you richer and more powerful."

In the meantime, he distributed among them his gold and silver plate, the trappings of his horses, and all the valuables contained in the palace of Calahorra; then he nominated governor of the province, the officer who had previously been only governor of the town.

Afterwards coming forward on the balcony, he divided among the soldiers eighty thousand golden crowns, which he had remaining. Then showing them his empty coffers:

"I commend them to your attention," said he, "for we will fill them at Burgos."

"At Burgos!" exclaimed soldiers and captains.

"At Burgos!" repeated the inhabitants, to whom this one night, passed in feasting, drinking, and embraces, was already a sufficient proof of fraternity—a proof which prudence warned them not to allow to degenerate into an abuse.

The day had now broken; the army was ready for march; the royal banner was already unfurled over the pennons of the several Castilian and Breton companies, when a loud noise was heard at the chief gate of Calahorra, and the exclamations of the people approaching the centre of the town, indicated that an important occurrence was taking place.

This was the arrival of a messenger.

Bertrand smiled. Henry rose up, beaming with satisfaction.

"Make room for him," said the king.

The crowd drew back.

Then, on an Arab horse with foaming nostrils and floating mane, restively pawing with limbs under as blades of steel, there appeared a man of swarthy complexion enveloped in a white bur-
gous.

"Where is the Prince Don Henry?" he asked.

"You mean the king?" said Duguesclin.

"I know no other king than Don Pedro," replied the Arab.

"This man, at least, does not turn his coat," muttered the constable.

"'Tis well!" said the prince; "let us cut the matter short. I am he to whom you wish to speak." The messenger bowed without alighting from his horse.

"Where do you come from?" asked Don Henry.

"From Burgos."

"On whose behalf?"

"On behalf of the king, Don Pedro."

"Don Pedro is at Burgos!" exclaimed Henry.

"Yes, my lord," replied the messenger.

Henry and Bertrand exchanged a look.

"And what are the wishes of Don Pedro?" asked the prince.

"For peace!" said the Arab.

"Oh! oh!" said Bertrand, in whom honesty spoke with a prompter and louder voice than self-interest, "that is good news."

Henry knit his brows.

Agénor trembled with delight; peace was the liberty of running after Aïssa, and the liberty of reaching her.

"And this peace," resumed Henry with a sharp voice, "on what conditions will it be granted?"

"Answer, my lord, that you, as well as ourselves desire it," answered the envoy, "and the king, my master, will make the conditions easy."

But in the meantime, Bertrand had reflected on the mission which he had received from King Charles V.;—a mission of vengeance with regard to Don Pedro, and of destruction with regard to the great companies.

"You cannot accept peace," said he to Henry, "before having united on your side, a sufficient number of advantages to make the conditions good."

"I thought so; but I waited for your concurrence," Henry replied with eagerness, for he trembled at the idea of sharing that which he wished entirely to possess.

"What is the prince's reply?" asked the messenger.

"Reply for me, Count de Borgia," said the king.

"I will do so, sire," said Bertrand with a bow. Then turning towards the messenger,

"Sir Herald," said he, "return to your master and tell him that we will treat for peace when we are at Burgos."

"At Burgos!" exclaimed the envoy with a tone more of alarm than surprise.

"Yes, at Burgos."

"In that town of which Don Pedro and his army hold possession?"

"Precisely so," said the constable.

"Is that your answer, my lord," said the herald turning to Henry of Transtamara.

The prince gave an affirmative nod.

"Then may God preserve you!" replied the envoy, shrouding his head with his mantle.

Bowing to the prince before starting, as he had done on his arrival, he turned his horse's head and went off at a walk, traversing the crowd, which, deceived in its expectations, remained mute and motionless on his passage.

"Go quicker, sir messenger," cried Bertrand, if you do not wish us to get there before you."

But the horseman, without turning his head, or appearing to perceive that these words were addressed to him, gradually brought his horse from a quiet to a brisker pace, and then to so rapid a gallop, that he was out of sight of the ramparts by the time the Breton advanced guard left the gates of Calahorra on the march to Burgos.

There are some rumours which fly through the air like atoms driven by the wind; they are like a breath, a scent, or a ray of light. Like lightning they strike, warn, and dazzle from afar. None can explain the phenomenon of an event being guessed at at the time of its occurrence, though passing at twenty leagues' distance; yet the fact which we mention is one of ascertained certainty. One day, perhaps, science having fathomed this problem, will no longer deign to

explain it; and it will then treat as an axiom what we now term a mystery of human organization.

So was it, that on the very evening that Henry entered Calahorra, side by side with the constable, the news of his proclamation as king of the Castiles, of Seville, and of Léon, came down to Burgos, where Don Pedro had arrived a quarter of an hour before.

What eagle passing through the sky had dropped it from his talons? None could say; but in a few instants, all were convinced of the fact. Don Pedro alone doubted. Mothril brought him round to the general opinion, by saying:—

"It is to be feared that this has taken place. It is likely that it should take place; and therefore so it is."

"But," said Don Pedro, "even supposing that this bastard has entered Calahorra, it is not probable that he has been proclaimed king."

"If he was not so proclaimed yesterday," said Mothril, "he certainly will be to-day."

"Then let us march straight on him, and make war," said Don Pedro.

"No; let us remain where we are, and make peace," said Mothril.

"Make peace?"

"Yes; even buy it, if it be necessary."

"Wretch!" cried Don Pedro, furiously.

"A promise!" said Mothril, shrugging his shoulders. "Does that cost so dear; and to you, too, sire?"

"Ah! ah!" said Don Pedro, who began to understand.

"Without doubt," continued Mothril. "What does Don Henry wish for? A throne! Give him one as high as you choose: you can hurl him from it afterwards. If you make him a king, he will no longer mistrust you, as you have placed the crown on his head. Is it, then, I would ask, so advantageous to have constantly, in unknown situations, a rival ready to fall on one like the thunderbolt, one knows not whence or when. Assign to Don Henry a kingdom; enclose him within limits thoroughly known to yourself; do with him as is done with the sturgeon, to which a pond stocked with live fish, and containing apparently a thousand recesses, is given. In that bason, expressly prepared for it, one is certain to find it when one wishes. But what a task to seek for it in the sea?"

"'Tis true," said Don Pedro, more and more attentive.

"If he ask you for Léon," continued Mothril, "give him Léon. No sooner has he accepted the gift, than he must needs thank you for it. You will then have him by your side, at your table, within arms' length: if for a day, an hour, or even ten minutes, it is an opportunity which fortune will not give, so long as you carry on war against each other. He is, they say, at Calahorra. Give him all the ground which lies between Calahorra and Burgos: that will only make you nearer to him."

Don Pedro now understood Mothril thoroughly.

"Yes," he muttered in reflection, "it is thus that I attracted Don Frederick."

"Ah!" said Mothril, "I really thought that you had lost your memory."

"'Tis well said," said Don Pedro, letting his hand fall on Mothril's shoulder, "very well."

And the king dispatched to Don Henry, one of those indefatigable Moors who measure days by the thirty leagues cleared by their horses.

It did not appear doubtful to Mothril, that Henry would accept, if only in the hope of wresting

from Don Pedro the second part of his kingdom, after having received the first. But he did not take the constable into his account. Therefore, when the reply came from Calahorra, Don Pedro and his counsellors were dismayed, firstly, because they did not believe in the Pretender's election, and afterwards because they exaggerated its consequences.

However, Don Pedro had an army; but an army is less strong when it is besieged. He had Burgos, but was the fidelity of Burgos to be relied on?

Mothril did not conceal from Don Pedro that the inhabitants of Burgos passed for being great lovers of novelty.

"We will burn the town," said Don Pedro.

Mothril shook his head.

"Burgos," he said, "is not one of those cities which can be burnt with impunity. It is inhabited by Christians, who detest the Moors, and the Moors are your friends; by Mussulmans, who detest the Jews, and the Jews are your treasurers; lastly, by Jews, who detest the Christians, and there are many Christians in your army. These people will tear each other to pieces, instead of the army of Don Henry; they will do more—each of the two parties, will betray the others to the Pretender. Believe me, sire, you had best find a pretext to leave Burgos, and I would advise you to leave it before the news of Don Henry's election can reach it."

"If I leave Burgos, I lose a city," said Don Pedro, hesitating.

"Not so; by returning to besiege Don Henry, you will find him in the position in which you now are, and while you acknowledge that the advantages are now on his side, those advantages will then be on yours. Try a retreat, sire."

"What—fly!" cried Don Pedro, raising his closed hand.

"He does not fly who returns, sire," answered Mothril.

Don Pedro still hesitated, but sight soon brought him to what counsel could not effect. He remarked groups gathering round thresholds; still more numerous groups collecting in public places, and among the men who composed these assemblies, he heard one who said:—

"The king, Don Henry."

"Mothril," said he, "you were right. I now think, in my turn, that it is time to depart."

A few minutes afterwards, Don Pedro was quitting Burgos, at the moment that the banners of Don Henry of Transtamara were appearing on the summits of the Asturian mountains.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CORONATION.

THE inhabitants of Burgos, who trembled at the idea of being taken between the two competitors, and who, in that case, saw that they would have to pay all the expenses of the war, no sooner perceived the retreat of Don Pedro, and recognised the banners of Don Henry, than on the very instant by a turn very easily understood, they became the warmest partizans of the new sovereign.

In civil wars, whoever shews even a passing inferiority, is sure to fall at once a few degrees lower than even this inferiority necessitated. Civil war is not only a struggle of interests, but also a conflict of self-love. To retreat in such a case, is to lose the game. The advice given by Mothril, advice given in accordance with his Moorish

nature, in which the estimate of courage is differently framed from ours, was therefore bad with regard to the Christians, who formed the greater part of the population of Burgos.

For their part again, the Mahometan and Jewish population, in the hope of gaining something by the change, united with the Christian population, to proclaim Don Henry king of the Castiles, of Séville, and of Léon, and to declare that Don Pedro had forfeited the throne.

It was then, amid unanimous acclamations, that Don Henry, conducted by the Bishop of Burgos, repaired to the palace still warm with the presence of Don Pedro.

Duguesclin installed his Bretons in Burgos, and established around it the French and Italian companies, which had remained faithful to their engagements when the English companies had left him. In this manner he could watch over the city without harassing it. Further, he instituted the strictest discipline; the least theft was to be punished among the Bretons with death, and among the foreigners by the whip. He understood that this conquest thus conquered by its own consent, required to be treated with great consideration, and that it was important his soldiers should be adopted by these new adherents to the cause of usurpation.

"Now," said he to Henry, "solemnity your highness, if you please. Send for your wife, the princess, who is impatiently waiting for news of you in Arragon, and let her be crowned queen at the same time as you are crowned king. Nothing makes so good an effect in ceremonies, as I have observed in France, as women and cloth of gold. And further, many persons little disposed to love you, and who yet ask for nothing better than to turn their backs on your brother, will exhibit an ardent zeal for the new queen, if, as is said, she is one of the most beautiful and graceful princesses in christendom. Farther," added the good constable, "it is a point on which your brother cannot enter into a contest with you, since he has killed his wife. And when all see you make so good a husband to Joan of Castile, they will only ask him the more what he did with Blanche of Bourbon."

The king smiled at these words, the logic of which he was forced to acknowledge; besides, at the same time that they satisfied his understanding, they flattered his pride and his mania for ostentation. The queen was, therefore, sent for to Burgos.

In the meantime the town was hung with tapestry, garlands of flowers were festooned to the walls, and the streets strewed with palms disappeared under a carpet of verdure. On all sides the Castilians ran in without arms, joyful, perhaps as yet undecided, but ~~de~~erring a definitive decision, till they could judge the effect of the splendour of the approaching ceremony, and of the munificence of their new master.

When the arrival of the queen was signalled, Duguesclin placed himself at the head of his Bretons, and went to receive her at a league's distance from the town.

The princess Joan of Castile was truly a beautiful lady, and her beauty was set off by the glitter of a splendid dress, and of a truly royal equipage.

She sat, says the chronicle, in a car covered with cloth of gold, and enriched with precious stones. The queen's three sisters accompanied her, and their ladies of honour followed in carriages almost equally magnificent.

Around these brilliant litters a crowd of pages glittering with silk, gold, and jewels, urged the graceful prancing of superb Andalusian coursers, whose breed, when crossed with that of Arabia, produces horses fleet as the wind and proud as the Castilians themselves.

The sun glittered on this brilliant *cortège*, while it cast its light at the same time on the coloured glass of the cathedral windows, and warmed the Egyptian incense which the nuns burned in golden censers.

Mingled with the Christians who thronged on the queen's path, were Mussulmans dressed in their richest caftans, and admiring those noble and beautiful women, whose light veils floating with the breeze, screened them from the sun, but not from the lookers on.

As soon as the queen saw Duguesclin approaching her, who was recognisable by his gilded armour, and by the constable's sword borne before him by a squire on a cushion of blue velvet, embroidered with golden *fleurs-de-lis*, she ordered the white mules, which drew her chariot, to be stopped, and hastily descended from her seat.

Following the example of Joan of Castile, though without knowing her intentions, the king's sisters, and the ladies of their suite, also alighted.

The queen advanced towards Duguesclin, who, when he perceived her, jumped from his horse. She then began running, says the chronicle, and came to him with outstretched arms.

The constable immediately unfastened his helmet, and cast it far behind him. So that, says the chronicle, when the queen saw him with his face uncovered, she hung round his neck and embraced him as a tender sister might have done.

"It is to you," she cried, with an emotion so deep as to gain the hearts of all present; "it is to you, illustrious constable, that I owe my crown! An honour most unexpectedly conferred on my house! Thanks, Sir Knight; God will give you a fitting reward. As to myself, I can only do one thing, which is to equal your services by my gratitude."

At those words, and above all at this royal embrace, so honourable to the good constable, a cry of assent almost formidable, from the great number of voices which took part in it, rose from the midst of the people and the army, accompanied by unanimous applause.

"Noël to the good constable!" they cried; "joy and prosperity to Queen Joan of Castile."

The king's sisters were less enthusiastic; they were merry and satirical girls. They cast side-long glances at the constable, and as the appearance of the good knight naturally suggested a comparison between the ideal they had formed, and the reality they had before their eyes, they whispered to each other—

"So that is the illustrious warrior; what a big head he has!"

"And see, countess, what round shoulders he has," continued the second of the young sisters.

"And what bandy legs!" said the third.

"Yes, but he has made our brother a king," resumed the eldest, to put a close to this investigation, which was so little to the good knight's advantage.

The fact is, that the illustrious knight had his great soul, which made him perform so many fine and noble actions, enclosed in a mould very little worthy of it; his enormous Breton head, full of good ideas and generous obstinacy, would have

appeared vulgar to whoever had omitted to remark the fire which darted from his black eyes, and the harmony of blended gentleness and resolution in his features.

He had, certainly, bandy legs; but the good knight had so often been on horseback for the honour of France, that, without a want of gratitude, none could reproach him with this curvature, contracted by holding to his generous steed.

No doubt, the king's second sister had rightly remarked that Duguesclin's shoulders were round, but to these inelegant shoulders, those muscular arms appended, which, with one effort, could make horse and rider bend in the *mêlée*.

The crowd could not say, "That is a handsome knight," but they were sure to say, "that is a formidable knight."

After this first interchange of politeness and thanks, the queen mounted on a white mule of Arragon, covered with a housing embroidered with gold, and a harness of gold and jewels, presented by the citizens of Burgos.

She begged Duguesclin to walk on her left, and chose to accompany the king's sisters, Messire Olivier de Mauny, the Bègue de Vilaines, and fifty other knights who left on foot by the side of the ladies of honour.

Thus they came to the palace; the king was waiting under a canopy of cloth of gold; near him was the Count of Lamarche, who had that morning arrived from France. When he perceived the queen he rose up; the queen, on her part, alighted from her horse, and came to kneel down before him. The king raised her up, and, after embracing her, uttered these words aloud:—

"To the monastery of Las Huelgas."

It was in that monastery that the coronation was to take place.

All followed then the king and queen, shouting "Noël."

Agénor, during all this noise and these fêtes, had withdrawn to a remote and gloomy lodging with his faithful Musaron.

Only this latter, who was not at all in love, but, on the other hand, as curious and prying as behoved a Gascon squire, had allowed his master to remain shut up by himself, and had availed himself of his seclusion to visit the town and attend all the ceremonies. When, therefore, he returned to Agénor in the evening, he had seen everything, and knew all that had passed.

He found Agénor wandering in the garden of his lodging, and eager to communicate the news he had collected, he told his master that the constable was no longer only Count de Borgia, but that further, before sitting down to table, the queen had asked the king a favour, and that this favour being granted, she had given to Duguesclin the county of Transtamara.

"A fine fortune," said Agénor, abruptly.

"That is not all, sir," continued Musaron, encouraged by this reply to proceed; as short as it was, it showed him he was listened to. "The king at this request of the queen, became stung with emulation, and before the constable had time to rise up, 'Messire,' he said, 'the county of Transtamara is the queen's gift; I must confer one in my turn, and I give you, for my part, the county of Soria.'"

"He is overwhelmed with favours, and it is no more than justice," said Agénor.

"But that is not all," continued Musaron; "all have had their share in the royal bounty."

Agénor smiled, recollecting that he had been

forgotten, though, in his second-rate position, he had also done Don Henry some service.

"All," he resumed; "how so?"

"Yes, sir; captains, officers, even the private soldiers. Truly I cannot cease asking myself two questions; first, how all Spain can be large enough to contain all that the king gives? and secondly, how all these people can have strength enough to carry away all that is given them?"

But Agénor had ceased to listen, and Musaron vainly waited a reply to the pleasantry he had uttered. Night had in the meantime come, and Agénor leaning against one of those balconies carved in trefoil of which the interstices are filled with foliage and flowers which, clinging to the marble pillars, form a vault over the windows. Agénor listened to the distant sounds of rejoicing and festivity which came to expire at his ear. At the same time the evening breeze wafted refreshment to his forehead full of burning thoughts, and the penetrating odours of myrtle and jasmine recalled to his mind the gardens of the Alcazar at Seville, and of Ernautor at Bordeaux. Such were the memories which had made him inattentive to Musaron's recital.

Therefore Musaron, who knew how to adapt himself to the state of his master's mind, according to circumstances, a task always easy to those who love us and who know our secrets—Musaron, to regain possession of his master's attention, chose a subject which he knew could not fail to draw him from his reverie.

"Do you know, Sir Agénor," said he, "that all these fêtes are only the prelude to war, and that a great expedition against Don Pedro will follow to-day's ceremonies; that is, will give the country to him who has taken the crown?"

"Well," said Agénor, "so be it; we will make the expedition."

"We shall have far to go, sir."

"Well, we will go far."

"'Tis there (Musaron made a gesture indicating immensity), 'tis there that Messire Bertrand wishes to let the bones of the companies rot; you understand?"

"Well, our bones will rot with the rest, Musaron."

"That will certainly be a great honour for me, sir, but——"

"But what?"

"But it is very right to say that the master's the master, and the servant the servant; that is, a poor machine."

"Why so, Musaron?" asked Agénor, struck with the lamentable tone which his squire affected.

"Because we differ essentially; you, who are a noble knight, serve your masters for honour, as it would appear, but I——"

"Well you?"

"I serve you for my part; firstly, for the honour of serving you, and then for the pleasure of your company; and lastly, to get my wages."

"But I have also my wages," rejoined Agénor, with some bitterness. "Did you not see Messire Bertrand, bring me a hundred crowns on behalf of the king—of the new king?"

"I know it, sir."

"Well, of those hundred crowns," added the young man laughing, "did you not have your share?"

"And a good share certainly, since I had the whole."

"Then you see well, that I also get my wages, since it is you who finger them."

"Yes; but what I want to come to is, that you

are not paid according to your deserts. A hundred golden crowns! I could cite thirty officers who have received five hundred, and who, over and above, have been made by the king, barons, or bannerets, or even seneschals of his household."

"Which means that the king has forgotten me; does it not?"

"Thoroughly."

"So much the better, Musaron; so much the better. I prefer that kings should forget me; during that time, they do me no harm at least."

"How now?" said Musaron. "Do you wish to make me believe that you are happy to remain moping in this garden, while others down there are busied in quaffing wine from golden cups, and exchanging sweet smiles with the ladies?"

"It is so, however, Master Musaron," replied Agénor. "And when I tell you so, I must beg you to believe me. I have amused myself more under these myrtles, conversing with my own thoughts, than a hundred knights have done down there by getting drunk on Xéres wine."

"That's not natural."

"It is so, however."

Musaron shook his head.

"I should have served you at table, sir, and it would be pleasant to be able to say on returning to my country—'I waited on my master at King Henry of Transtamara's coronation feast.'"

Agénor shook his head with a melancholy smile.

"You are," said he, "the squire of a poor adventurer, Master Musaron; be satisfied with being alive; that is a proof that you are not dead with hunger, which might easily have happened to us, having already happened to so many others."

"Besides, those hundred crowns of gold, I have no doubt," said Musaron, "those hundred crowns of gold—but if I spend them, I shall have them no longer, and then what are we to live with? What are we to pay medicines and doctors with, when your zeal for Don Henry will have brought you wounds and bruises?"

"You are a worthy servant, Musaron," said Agénor with a laugh, "and I hold your health very dear. Go to rest, therefore, Musaron, as it is getting late, and allow me to amuse myself again in my own way, by conversing with my thoughts. Go to rest now, and you will only be the readier to buckle on your armour again."

Musaron obeyed. He retired with a sly laugh, as he thought he had awakened a little ambition in his master's heart, and hoped that ambition would bear its fruits.

However, it was not so. Agénor entirely absorbed by amorous thoughts, really concerned himself neither with duchies nor treasures. He was a sufferer from that painful nostalgia which makes us regret, like our natal soil, any country in which we have been happy.

He regretted then the gardens of the Alcazar and of Bordeaux.

And yet as a trace of light remains in heaven, even when the sun has disappeared, so a trace of Musaron's words remained in his mind, even after the squire's departure.

"Can I," he said, "become a rich lord, a powerful captain? No! I can foresee nothing similar in my destiny. I have neither taste, strength, nor ardour to conquer any happiness but one. What does it matter to me that I have been forgotten in the distribution of royal favours? All kings are ungrateful. What does it matter that the constable has not invited me to the feast, and distinguished me among the captains? Men are for-

getful and unjust. Further," he added, "when I am sick of their forgetfulness and injustice, I will ask for my dismissal."

"Gently!" cried a voice close to Agénor, who trembled and started back almost frightened; "gently, young man! We stand in need of your services."

Agénor turned round and saw two men wrapped in dark cloaks, who had just appeared at the bottom of the leafy cabinet, which he believed untenanted, his abstraction having prevented him from hearing the sound of their footsteps on the sand.

The one who had spoken came to Mauléon and took him by the arm.

"The constable!" muttered the young man.

"Who comes to prove to you by his presence that he has not forgotten you," continued Bertrand.

"It is because you are not a king," said Mauléon.

"It is true the constable is not a king," said the second person; "but I am, count, and it is even to you, I recollect, that I owe a part of my crown."

Agénor recognised Don Henry.

"Sire," he stammered, quite disconcerted, "forgive me, I beg."

"You are already forgiven, messire," replied the king, "only as you have in no respect been a sharer in the rewards bestowed upon others, you shall have something better than the others have had."

"Nothing, sire, nothing," resumed Mauléon. "I desire nothing, for it would be thought I had asked for it."

Don Henry smiled.

"Be composed, Sir Knight," he replied; "none will say that, I engage; for few would ask for what I am about to offer you. The mission is full of dangers but is at the same time so honorable, that it will force all Christendom to cast its eyes upon you. Seigneur de Mauléon you are about to become my ambassador, and I am a king."

"Oh, sire! I was far from expecting such an honour."

"Come, no shamefacedness, young man," said Bertrand; "the king wished first to send me where you are going, but he recollected that I might be needed here to lead the companies, people difficult enough to lead, I warrant you. I had spoken to his highness about you, just at the moment that you were accusing us of forgetting you, as a man of firmness and eloquence, possessing a thorough knowledge of the Spanish language. Being a Béarraais, you are in fact half a Spaniard. But as the king was saying to you, the mission is dangerous; it is requisite to go and find Don Pedro."

"Don Pedro!" cried Agénor, transported with joy.

"Ah, ah! that pleases you, I see, Sir Knight," Henry remarked.

Agénor felt that this joy had made him indiscreet, and suppressed it.

"Yes, sire; it pleases me," he said, "as it gives me an opportunity of serving your highness."

"You will truly serve me, and essentially," resumed Henry, but I warn you, noble messenger, at the peril of your life."

"Give your orders, sire."

"It will be necessary," the king continued, "to cross the whole of the plain of Segovia, where Don Pedro is at this moment. I will give you



as a letter of credence a jewel which belonged to my brother, and which Don Pedro will certainly recognise. But reflect well on what I am about to say, before you accept, Sir Knight."

"Say on, sire."

"You are enjoined if you are attacked on your journey, made prisoner, or threatened with death, not to discover the object of your mission; you would discourage our partisans too much by teaching them that, at the height of prosperity, I had made overtures of conciliation to my enemy."

"Of conciliation!" exclaimed Agénor with astonishment.

"The constable will have it so," said the king.

"Sire, I never will; I only entreat," said the constable. "I have begged your highness to poise well the gravity, in the eyes of the Lord, of a war like that which you are carrying on. It is not enough to have on one's side only the kings of

the earth; in circumstances such as these, we should also have the King of Heaven. I depart from my instructions, it is true, in urging you to make peace, but King Charles V. himself will approve me, in his wisdom, when I say to him: 'Sire, they were two children, born from the same father, two brothers, who having drawn the sword against each other, might some day meet and inflict mutual destruction. Sire, in order that God may pardon one brother for drawing his sword against another, the one who desires God's pardon should first have justice entirely on his side. Don Pedro offered you peace—you refused; because, had you accepted, it might have been supposed you were afraid; now that you have conquered—that you have been crowned, that you are a king, offer it in your turn, and it will be said that you are a magnanimous prince, without ambition, and a lover only of justice; and that portion of your estates which you now lose, will soon come

back to you, through the free choice of your subjects. If he refuse, well then! we will push on; you will have no longer anything to reproach yourself with, and he will have of his own option devoted himself to ruin."

"Yes," replied Henry, with a sigh; "but shall I have another opportunity of working his ruin?"

"My lord," said Bertrand, "I have said what I have said, and have spoken according to my conscience. A man who wishes to walk in the straight road, should not say to himself that perhaps that road might have been equally straight had he made a circuit."

"So be it," answered the king, making up his mind, at least in appearance.

"Your majesty is then thoroughly convinced?" said Bertrand.

"Yes, without return."

"And without regret?"

"Oh! oh!" said Henry, "you ask too much, sir constable. I give you *carte blanche* to conclude peace, do not ask me anything further."

"Then, sire, permit me to give the knight his instructions, such as we have drawn them up."

"Do not take that trouble," said the king with vivacity. "I will explain all that to the knight, and besides, (he whispered,) you know what I have to remit him."

"Very well, sire," said Bertrand, who saw no ground for suspicion in the eagerness which the king showed to get rid of him.

And he departed. But he had not crossed the threshold, when he turned back again.

"You remember, sire," said he: "a good peace, the half of the kingdom if needful, truly fraternal conditions! a very prudent and very Christian manifesto, with nothing to outrage pride."

"Yes, certainly," said the king, blushing in spite of himself, "yes, you may, sir constable, rely on my intentions."

Bertrand did not think it becoming to dwell on the subject longer. However his suspicions seemed to be awaked for an instant, but the king dismissed him with so friendly a smile that they again became lulled.

The king followed Bertrand with his eyes.

"Sir Knight," said he to Mauléon, as soon as the constable was lost among the trees, "here is the jewel which is to accredit you with Don Pedro, but let the words just uttered by the constable be effaced from your memory, so as to allow mine to engrave themselves more profoundly."

Agénor gave a sign that he listened.

"I promise peace to Don Pedro," continued Don Henry; "I will resign to him the half of Spain, from Madrid as far as Cadiz; I will remain his friend and ally, but on one condition."

Agénor raised his head, still more surprised at the tone, than at the words of the prince.

"Yes," resumed Henry, "whatever the constable may say to it, I repeat, on one condition. You appear surprised, Mauléon, that I should conceal anything from the good knight. Listen: the constable is a Breton, a man obstinate in his probity, but knowing little of the small value set on oaths in Spain,* a country where passion burns

the heart with more heat than the sun does the soil. He cannot, therefore, know the extent of Don Pedro's hatred towards me. He, the worthy Breton, forgets that Don Pedro killed my brother Don Frederick, by treachery, and strangled his master's sister, without trial. He imagines that here, as in France, war is waged on the field of battle. King Charles, who ordered him to exterminate Don Pedro, knows better the man he has to deal with; and it is the genius of King Charles which has inspired the orders I give you."

Agénor bowed, frightened, at the bottom of his soul, by these effusions of royal confidence.

"You will go, therefore, to Don Pedro," continued the king, "and you will promise him in my name, what I have mentioned, on the condition, however, that the Moor, Mothril, and twelve notables of his court, whose names are written on this parchment, shall be delivered to me, as hostages, with their families and their goods."

Agénor trembled: the king had said with their families; Mothril, if he came to the court of Don Henry, was then to come with Aïssa.

"In which case," continued the king, "you will bring them with you."

A tremor of joy passed through Agénor's veins, and did not escape Henry's attention, but he was deceived in its origin.

"You are alarmed," said Don Henry; "fear nothing; you think that amongst those misbelievers your life may be endangered on the road. No, the danger is not great, at least in my opinion; gain the Douro quickly, and as soon as you have crossed its course, you will find, on your return to this side, an escort which will protect you from all insult, and will ensure me the safe possession of the hostages."

"Sire, your highness is mistaken," said Mauléon; "it is not fear that made me tremble."

"What, then?" asked the king.

"Impatience to start for your service; I wish that I was already on the road."

"You are a brave knight," exclaimed Henry; "a noble head, and I would answer, young man, for your going far; would you link yourself thoroughly to my fortunes?"

"Ah! sire," said Mauléon, "you have already rewarded me more than I deserve."

"You will, therefore, start?"

"Forthwith."

"Leave, then. Here are three diamonds which are called the three Magi;* they would each be worth a thousand crowns to the Jews—and there is no want of Jews in Spain. Here are a thousand florins more; but they are only for your squire's travelling case."

"Sire, you overwhelm me," said Mauléon.

"On your return," continued Don Henry, "I will make you the banneret of a banner of a hundred lances, equipped at my own expense."

"Oh! not a word more, sire, I entreat."

"But promise me that you will not mention to the constable the conditions I have imposed on my brother."

"Oh! fear not, sire; he would object to those conditions, and I wish not for his opposition more than you do."

* M. Dumas is too heedless of scattering imputations on national character. I believe that so far from this picture being just, the Spaniards have in times past borne a character for good faith and honour quite as high as any European nation and certainly higher than the French, whose annals in all times of civil dissension, whether in that of the English wars, of the Orleans and Armagnac factions, of the Huguenot wars, of the Fronde, or of the revolution, offer the most revolting spectacles of perfidy and perjury. The Spanish

character is degenerate from what it was, but in their last civil wars, there appears to have been few examples of that treachery and tergiversation so common in the civil discords of France, until that act of betrayal on the part of Maroto, which brought them to a termination.—TRANSLATOR.

* Otherwise the three "Wise Men of the East," or the three kings of Cologne, Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar.

"Thanks, Sir Knight," said Henry; "you are more than brave, you are intelligent."

"I am in love," muttered Mauléon to himself, "and it is said that love gives one all those qualities which one would not otherwise possess."

The king went to rejoin Duguesclin.

Agénor, in the meanwhile, went to rouse up his squire, and two hours afterwards both were trotting by the light of the moon on the road leading to Segovia.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW DON PEDRO ON HIS RETURN REMARKED THE LITTER, AND WHAT FOLLOWED THEREUPON.

DON PEDRO, in the meanwhile, had reached Segovia, bearing with him the bitterest vexation in the depths of his heart.

The first blows struck at the royalty he had for ten years enjoyed, had been more painful to him than were at a later period reverses sustained in battle, and the faithlessness of his best friends. It appeared to him, accustomed as he was to roam by day and by night, to go about Seville habitually, with no other guard than his sword, or disguise than his cloak, that to be obliged to cross Spain with so much precaution, was like flying, and that a king was lost when he was once forced to make a compromise of his inviolability.

But by his side, like the genius* of antiquity who breathed rage into the heart of Achilles, went Mothril, galloping when he hastened his course, going slower when he slackened his speed, — Mothril, a true minister of hatred and fury, an unwearied counsellor of bitterness, offering the deliciously tart fruits of vengeance, — Mothril, always prodigal in imaginations of evil, and ready in avoiding dangers, — Mothril, whose inexhaustible eloquence, drawing its resources from the unknown treasures of the east, showed the fugitive king more treasure, more resources, and more power, than he had dreamed in his most prosperous days.

Thanks to him, the long and dusty road became abridged like the riband wound by the spinner. Mothril, the man of the desert, knew at mid-day how to find the spring hidden under oaks and plantains: Mothril knew, when they passed through towns, how to attract for Don Pedro some cries of delight, some demonstrations of fidelity, — the last reflections of a dying royalty.

"They love me still, then," said the king; "or they still fear me, which is, perhaps, better."

"Become a king, in truth, once more, and you will see whether they will not adore, or will not tremble before you," replied Mothril, with an irony which escaped observation.

But in the midst of these fears and hopes, and of the questions put by Don Pedro, Mothril had remarked one thing with joy — that is, the king's complete silence with reference to Maria Padilla. This enchantress, — who, when present, had so great an influence over him that it was attributed to magic, — now that she was absent, appeared not only exiled from his heart, but erased from his memory. This was because Don Pedro, a man of ardent imagination, of flexible caprice, a man of the South, — that is, a man of passion, in the full sense of the word, — had been, since the beginning of his journey with Mothril, subjected to the influence of another thought: — that litter, which from Bordeaux to Vittoria had

remained constantly shut; that woman flying in Mothril's track over mountains, and whose veil three or four times wafted aside by the wind, had allowed a glimpse of one of those adorable Eastern Peris, with their velvet eyes, their blue black hair, their smooth and harmonious complexion, — that sound of the guzla which watched through the darkness of the night, with love, while Don Pedro was watching with anxiety; all this had by degrees banished from Don Pedro's mind the remembrance of Maria Padilla: and it was still less distance which had injured the absent mistress, than the presence of that unknown and mysterious being, whom Don Pedro, with his picturesque and exalted imagination, appeared ready to take for some genius subjected to the more powerful enchanter, Mothril.

They arrived thus at Segovia, without any serious obstacles having impeded the king's progress. There nothing was changed. The king found every thing just as he left it — a throne in a palace, archers in a good town, respectful subjects about the archers.

The king breathed again.

On the morrow of his arrival, a considerable body of men was signalled from the walls. It was Caverley and his company, who, faithful to their sovereign's allegiance, came with that nationality which has always made the strength of England, to join the ally of the Black Prince, himself expected by Don Pedro.

On the day preceding, a considerable body of Andalusians and Moors coming to the king's assistance, had also effected a junction on the road.

An emissary soon arrived from the Prince of Wales, that eternal and indefatigable enemy of the French name, whom John and Charles V. always met with whenever France, during their two reigns, had to experience a reverse; this emissary brought ample and welcome news to the king, Don Pedro.

The Black Prince had assembled an army at Auch, and had now been for twelve days on the march with that army; he had dispatched this envoy from the centre of Navarre, an ally which he had detached from Don Henry's cause, in order to announce to Don Pedro his approaching arrival.

Don Pedro's throne, shaken for an instant by the proclamation at Burgos of Don Henry de Transtamara, was therefore gradually becoming more and more secure. And in proportion as it became stronger, the unvarying partizans of power ran in from all sides, good people who were already preparing to salute Don Henry at Burgos, when they learned that the time for starting had not yet come, and that by too great hurry they might well chance to leave an ill-dethroned king behind them.

To these persons, always numerous, must be added the less bulky, but better chosen group of the faithful and the pure, of those hearts of diamond-like transparency and solidity, for whom the king once crowned is a king till his death, as they have become the slaves of their oath from the day that they swore fidelity to their king. These men may suffer, fear, and even hate the man, but with regard to the prince, they wait patiently and loyally till God shall absolve them from their promise by calling to him his elect.

These loyal men are easy to recognise in a times and epochs. They have a less fine exterior than others, they speak with less emphasis, and having humbly and respectfully saluted the king

* This genius is wholly unmentioned by Homer, and appears imagined by M. Dumas himself.

re-established on his throne, they withdraw at the head of their vassals and await the hour of sacrificing their lives for that living principle.

The only thing which cast a chill over the welcome given by these faithful servants to Don Pedro was the presence of the Moors now more powerful with that king than ever.

That warlike race of Saracens swarmed around Mothril like bees round the hive which encloses their queen. They understood that it was that bold and skilful Moor who linked them to the side of that bold and skilful Christian prince; they composed therefore a formidable *corps d'armée*, and as they had everything to gain by civil war, they came in on all sides with an enthusiasm and activity which the Christian subjects viewed in mute inaction with admiration and jealousy.

Don Pedro found gold in the public chest; he immediately displayed that dazzling luxury which captivates the heart through the eyes, and ambition through interest. As the Prince of Wales was soon about to make his entry into Segovia, it had been decided that magnificent festivities, whose splendour should pale the ephemeral display of Henry's coronation, should be given to restore popular confidence and produce the confession that the true and only king is the one who possesses and expends the most.

Meanwhile, Mothril followed the long-cherished project which was to bind Don Pedro to him through his senses, as well as through his understanding, of which he had hold already. The guzla of Aïssa was heard every night, and, as like a true child of the East, all her songs were songs of love, their notes floating on the breeze came to caress the prince's solitude, and brought to his blood, parched with fever, those magic pleasures which are the transient slumber of the indefatigable Southern temperament.*

Mothril daily waited for some word from Don Pedro which should reveal the presence of that secret fire, which he perceived was kindled within him, but he waited in vain.

One day, however, Don Pedro said to him abruptly, and without preparation, as if making a violent effort to break the cord which held his tongue.

"Well, Mothril, no news from Seville?"

This word unveiled all Don Pedro's anxiety. Seville meant Maria Padilla.

Mothril trembled: that very morning he had caused to be seized on the road from Tolédo to Segovia, and to be thrown into the Adaja, a Nubian slave, charged with a letter from Maria Padilla, to the king.

"No, sire," said he.

Don Pedro fell into a gloomy reverie. Then replying aloud to the voice which spoke to him in secret:

"Thus then has become obliterated from the mind of that woman, that devouring passion to which I have had to sacrifice my brother, my wife, my honour, and my crown; for who has torn the crown from my head? It is not alone the bastard, Don Henry: it is also the constable."

Don Pedro made a menacing gesture which boded no good to Duguesclin, should ill-fortune ever cause him to fall again into Don Pedro's hands.

* There is, I am afraid, a great want of clear and distinct meaning in this sentence. How can excited passion be called a transient slumber, *passager sommeil* &c?—
TRANSLATOR.

Mothril did not follow the king on that track; his views were fixed on another object.

"Donna Maria," he resumed, "wished above all things to be queen, and, as at Seville it may be believed that your highness is no longer a king——"

"You have already told me that, Mothril, and I did not believe you."

"I repeat it to you, sire, and you begin to believe me. I have already told you, that when I received your orders to go and seek at Coimbra the unfortunate Don Frederick ——"

"Mothril!"

"You know with what tardiness, I may even say with what repugnance, I performed that order."

"Silence Mothril, silence," exclaimed Don Pedro.

"Your honour, however, sire, was seriously compromised."

"No doubt it was; but those crimes cannot be attributed to Maria Padilla, but to those infamous persons."

"Certainly; but had it not been for Maria Padilla, you would have known nothing, for I was silent, and yet it was not from ignorance."

"She loved me, then, since she was jealous?"

"You are a king, and on the death of the unhappy Blanche, she might become a queen. Besides, one may be jealous without loving. You were jealous of Donna Bianca—did you love her, sire?"

At this moment, as if the words pronounced by Mothril had been a given signal, the sounds of the guzla were heard, and Aïssa's words, too distant to be understood, fell on Don Pedro's ear with an harmonious murmur.

"Aïssa," muttered the king; "is it not Aïssa who sings?"

"I think so, sire," said Mothril.

"Your daughter, or your favourite slave, is she not?" asked Don Pedro, with an absent air.

Mothril shook his head with a smile.

"Oh, no!" said he; "one does not kneel before a daughter, sire; before a slave bought with gold, an old and prudent man does not clasp his hands."

"Who, then, is she?" exclaimed Don Pedro, whose thoughts, momentarily concentrated on the mysterious damsel, were bursting their bounds. "Are you playing with me, cursed Moor? are you burning me for your amusement with a hot iron, that you may have the pleasure of seeing me bound like a bull?"

Mothril drew back almost frightened, so abrupt and violent was this outburst.

"Will you answer me?" cried Don Pedro, who laboured under one of those frenzies of passion which change a king to a maniac, a man to a wild beast.

"Sire, I dare not tell you."

"Bring me that woman, then," exclaimed Don Pedro, "and let me ask herself."

"Oh! sire," exclaimed Mothril, as if dismayed at such an order.

"I am the master, and command you!"

"Sire, for pity's sake——"

"Let her be here in an hour's time, or I will go and snatch her from her apartment."

"Sire," said Mothril, drawing up with the calm and solemn gravity of the Orientals, "Aïssa is of too lofty a race for profane hands to be laid upon her; do not, oh! King Don Pedro, offend Aïssa."

"And how should the Moresca find offence in my love?" asked Don Pedro; "my wives were the daughters of princes, and more than once my mistresses have been fully worth my wives."

"Sire," said Mothril, "were Aïssa my daughter, as you think, I should say 'King Don Pedro, spare my child, do not dishonour your servant. And, perhaps, in recognising the voice of him who has given you such frequent and such good counsel, you would spare my child. But Aïssa has in her veins a blood nobler than that of your wives and your mistresses; Aïssa is more noble than a princess, Aïssa is the daughter of the King Mohammed, the descendant of Mohammed, the prophet. You see, therefore, that Aïssa is more than a princess, is more than a queen, and I order you, Don Pedro, to respect Aïssa.'"

Don Pedro stopped, subdued by the proud and commanding tone of the Moor.

"The daughter of Mohammed, King of Grenada," he muttered.

"Yes, the daughter of Mohammed, King of Grenada, whom you caused to be murdered. I was, you know, in that great prince's service, and I saved her, when your soldiers were pillaging his palace, and when a slave was carrying her away in his mantle to sell her. It is now nine years since then. Aïssa was barely seven years old; you heard that I was a faithful counsellor, and you summoned me to your court. God willed that I should serve you. You are my master, you are great among the great; I have obeyed. But the daughter of my former master has followed me to the abode of the new one; she believes me her father, the poor child having been brought up in the harem without ever seeing the majestic face of the sultan, who is no more. Now you have my secret, your violence has torn it from me. But remember, King Don Pedro, that I watch for you, as a slave devoted to your slightest caprices, but that I will rear myself like the serpent to defend against you the only object which I prefer to yourself."

"But I love Aïssa," exclaimed Don Pedro, beside himself.

"Love her then Don Pedro, as you may, for she is of a blood at least equal to your own; love her, but obtain her by her own choice," replied the Moor. "I will not stand in your way. You are young, handsome, powerful; why should this young virgin not love you, and grant to your love what you wish to obtain by violence?"

At these words, darted like Parthian arrows, and which pierced Don Pedro's heart to the core, Mothril lifted up the tapestry and withdrew backwards from the room.

"But she will hate me; she ought to hate me, if she knows that it was I who killed her father."

"I never speak ill of the master whom I serve," said Mothril, holding up the tapestry; "and all Aïssa knows of you is, that you are a good king and a great sultan."

Mothril let the tapestry fall again, and during some time Don Pedro might hear on the flags the sound of his slow and solemn steps wending towards Aïssa's chamber.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW MOTHRIIL WAS NAMED CHIEF OF THE MOORISH TRIBES, AND MINISTER OF THE KING DON PEDRO.

WE have said that when he left the king, Mothril had taken the direction of Aïssa's chamber.

The young girl confined in her apartment,

guarded by iron bars, and watched over by Mothril, longed for air in default of liberty.

Aïssa had not the resource which the women of our times possess, of replacing by news the absence of correspondence; for her to see Agénor no longer was to cease to live; no longer to hear him speak, was to have one's ears closed to all earthly sounds.

Yet a deep conviction lived within her; it was that she had inspired a love equal to his; she knew that unless dead, Agénor who had already succeeded in meeting her three times, would succeed in seeing her a fourth; and with her youthful confidence in the future that Agénor should die, appeared to her an impossibility.

Nothing remained for Aïssa but to wait and hope.

The women of the East make for themselves a life of perpetual dreams, mingled with energetic actions, which are the awakenings or the breaks of their voluptuous slumber. Certainly, if the poor captive had been able to act in order to find Mauleon once more, she would have acted; but ignorant as one of those Eastern flowers of which she had the perfume and the bloom, she knew only to turn in the direction whence love, that sun of her life, shone upon her. To make active movements, to procure money, to make inquiries, to fly, such were matters never present to her imagination, as she deemed them completely impossible.

Besides, where was Agénor? where was she herself? she did not know. At Segovia, no doubt, but this name of Segovia was to her the name of a town and nothing more. Where that town was she was ignorant, not knowing even the name of the different provinces of Spain, having made five hundred leagues without knowing the countries which she passed through, and recalling only three spots of those different countries—those where she had seen Agénor.

But how well had those three spots remained engraven on her mind. How clearly she could see the banks of the Zézère, that sister of the Tagus, with its groves of wild olive trees, near which her litter had been set down its abrupt banks and its dark waves from amidst the plashing moans of which seemed to arise once more Agénor's first words of love, and the last sigh of the unfortunate page! How clearly could she see her room in the Alcazar, its bars entwined with honeysuckle opening on a garden full of verdure, in the midst of which foaming waters spouted into marble basins! Lastly, how clearly she saw the gardens of Bordeaux, with their lofty trees of sombre foliage, separated from the house by that lake of light which the moon poured from the heights of heaven.

Every tone, every aspect, every detail, every leaf of these several landscapes was present to her eyes.

But, whether these points, how luminous soever in the obscurity of her life, were to her right or her left, to the south or to the north of the world, was a question which the ignorant young girl would have found impossible to solve, as she had learnt nothing but what is learnt in the harem, that is, the delights of the bath, and the voluptuous dreams of idleness.

Mothril knew this well, he would otherwise have been less calm.

He entered the young girl's room.

"Aïssa," he said, after having made his prostrations according to custom, "may I hope that you will listen with some favour to what I am about to say to you?"

"I owe you everything, and am attached to you," replied the young girl, looking at Mothril as if she had desired to read the truth of his words in his eyes.

"Does the life which you lead please you?" asked Mothril.

"In what respect?" asked Aissa, who was clearly seeking the object of this question.

"I wish to know if you take pleasure in living shut up."

"Oh, no," said Aissa briskly.

"You would wish then to change your condition?"

"Assuredly."

"What change would please you best?"

Aissa remained silent. The only thing she desired, she found it impossible to mention.

"You don't answer me," said Mothril.

"I know not what to answer," said she.

"Would you not like, for instance," continued the Moor, "to ride on a great Spanish horse, followed by women, knights, dogs, and music?"

"It is not that which I most desire," replied the young girl. "But after that which I desire, I should also like that; provided only——"

She stopped short.

"Provided?" asked Mothril with curiosity.

"Nothing," answered the haughty young girl, "nothing!"

Notwithstanding this reserve, Mothril understood very well what the provided meant.

"So long as you are with me," continued Mothril, "and that I pass for your father, although that distinguished honor does not belong to me, I shall be responsible for your happiness and your repose—so long as this is the case, the only thing you desire, can never be."

"And when will that change take place?" asked the young girl with naïve impatience.

"When a husband possesses you."

She shook her head.

"A husband shall never possess me," she said.

"You interrupt me, Senora," said Mothril with gravity. "I was, however, speaking on subjects important as regards your happiness."

Aissa looked fixedly at the Moor.

"Perhaps you do not well know what liberty is," repeated Mothril, "I will tell you: liberty is the right to go through the streets without your face being covered, or your being shut up in a litter; it is the right to receive visits like the Franks, to take part in hunting parties and entertainments, and to be present at great festivals in the company of knights."

As Mothril continued speaking, a slight blush gradually diffused itself over Aissa's pale complexion.

"But, on the contrary," replied the young girl with hesitation, "I had heard that the husband took away this right instead of giving it."

"When he is a husband that is sometimes true; but, before he is so, above all, when he fills a distinguished rank, he permits his betrothed to behave as I have said. In Spain and France, for instance, the daughters even of Christian kings listen to gallant propositions without being dishonored. He who is about to marry them, allows them before hand to make an experiment of the lofty and sumptuous life reserved for them, and to give you an example; you remember Maria Padilla?"

Aissa listened.

"Well, was not Maria Padilla the queen of festivities—the all-powerful mistress of the Alcazar, at Seville, in the provinces, in Spain? Do

you not remember having seen her through our grilled blinds in the palace courts, wearying her noble Arab courser, and uniting round her for whole days those whom she preferred? While, as I was saying, you were all this time recluse and concealed, unable to cross the threshold of your room, seeing only your women, and unable to speak to any one of what dwelt in your understanding and your heart."

"But," said Aissa, "Donna Maria Padilla loved Don Pedro; for when one loves in this country, one is free, it would appear, to say so openly to him whom she loves. He chooses you, and does not buy you as is done in Africa. Donna Maria loved Don Pedro, I tell you, and I should not love him who thought of marrying me."

"How know you that, Senora?"

"Who is he?" eagerly asked the young girl.

"You question with great ardor," said Mothril.

"And you reply very slowly," said Aissa.

"Well, I meant to tell you that Donna Maria was free."

"Not so, since she loved."

"One may become free even when one loves, senora."

"How so?"

"One ceases to love, that's all."

Aissa shrugged her shoulders as if he had mentioned an impossibility.

"Donna Maria has recovered her freedom, I tell you; for Don Pedro loves her no longer, and is no longer loved by her."

Aissa raised her head in surprise; the Moor continued:

"You see then, Aissa, that they have not been married, and that yet both have enjoyed the high rank and the well being that high rank and illustrious company give."

"What are you driving at?" said Aissa, as if suddenly struck by a flash of light.

"At telling you what you have already perfectly well understood."

"Say on."

"It is, that an illustrious lord——"

"The king—is it not so?"

"The king himself, senora," replied Mothril with a bow.

"Is thinking of giving me the place left vacant by Maria Padilla?"

"And his crown."

"As to Maria Padilla?"

"Maria Padilla only learned how to get a promise of it; another younger, more beautiful, or more skillful may obtain the gift."

"But she—she who is no longer loved, what becomes of her?" asked the young girl pensively interrupting the quick motion which her slender fingers were giving to a rosary of aloes wood set in gold.

"Oh," said Mothril, affecting unconcern, "she has made herself another happiness; some say that she has feared the wars into which the king has been plunged; others, and that is more probable, that loving another person, she is about to take that person as her husband."

"What person?" asked Aissa.

"A western knight," replied Mothril.

Aissa fell into a deep reverie, for these perfidious words revealed to her progressively, as by magic power, all the soft future which she dreamt, and of which, through ignorance and timidity, she did not dare to raise the veil.

"Ah! they say that?" asked Aissa at last, with delight.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OF WHAT PASSED BETWEEN AGENOR AND MUSARON, AS THEY JOURNEYED IN THE SIERRA D'ARCAENA.

THE reader has seen Mauleon and his squire starting on their road, on a fine moonlight night, by the desire of the new king of Castile.

Nothing so much disposed Musaron's heart to rejoicing as the jingle of crown pieces, swaying in the depths of his immense leathern pocket, and, on the occasion we mention, it was not the chink of some happy windfall which caused the worthy squire's gaiety: it was the heavy intense sound of a hundred large coins compressed into a bag, and striving to wedge their thickness together; Musaron's joy, therefore, was great and sonorous in proportion.

The road from Burgos to Segovia already beaten at that time, was a fine one, but even on account of its being a fine and well frequented road, Mauleon thought it would not be prudent to adhere strictly to its track. He, therefore, like a true Bearnais, plunged into the Sierra, following the picturesque undulations of its western slope, which flowery, rugged and mossy, extends like a natural furrow from Coimbra to Tudela.

From the commencement of the journey, Musaron, who had counted on the assistance of his crowns to make his journey according to his own wishes, Musaron, we say, found he had made a great mistake. If, in the towns and the plain, the people had been disburthened of their wealth under the double pressure of Don Pedro and Don Henry, what must have been the case with the mountaineers, who, for their part, never possessed riches? Therefore, our travellers, reduced to sheep's milk, to the coarse home-made wine, to barley and millet bread, regretted very speedily, Musaron especially, the dangers of the plain—dangers intermixed with enjoyment, with roast kid, with olla podrida, and with good wine which had grown old in the leather.

Therefore Musaron began by complaining bitterly that he had no longer an enemy to fight.

Agenor, who was thinking of other matters, allowed him to complain without replying; then at last roused from the depths of his reverie by the ferocious rodomontades of his squire, he had the misfortune to smile.

This smile, in which, it is true, a shade of incredulity might be discerned, displeased Musaron.

"I do not believe, sir," said he, compressing his lips to give himself an air of dissatisfaction, although that unaccustomed expression of countenance clashed with the usual heartiness of his honest face, "I do not think, sir, that you have ever doubted my bravery, which more than one action of mine might prove."

Agenor gave a sign of assent.

"Yes, more than one action," Musaron resumed. "Shall I speak of the Moor so well riddled through the body, who lies in the ditches of Medina Sadonia? or of the other whom I slaughtered in the chamber of the unfortunate Queen Blanche? Address and courage, I say it with modesty," he continued, "will be my device, if ever I rise to knightly rank."

"All that is the exact truth, my dear Musaron," said Agenor; "but let me know what you are driving at with your long speeches and your severe frowns."

"Sir," answered Musaron, comforted by the sympathetic tone which he had remarked in his master's voice, "don't you find this very wearisome?"

"Yes," said Mothril; "and they add that she exclaimed on recovering her liberty: 'Oh! what happiness have I not derived from the choice of the king, since it has taken me from the silence of home, to place me in that broad light in which I have been able to discern my love.'"

"Yes, yes," continued the young girl, absorbed in meditation.

"And certainly," continued Mothril, "it is not in the harem, or the convent, that she would have found that joy which has now fallen to her lot."

"'Tis true," said Aissa.

"Then in the interest of your own happiness, Aissa, you will listen to the king?"

"But the king will allow me time to reflect, will he not?"

"All the time that pleases you, and that it is fit he should leave to a young woman of such noble descent as yours. He is, however, a gloomy lord, irritated by his misfortunes. Your words are sweet, when you so please; make them so, Aissa. Don Pedro is a great king, whose sensibility must be treated with care, and whose desires must be increased."

"I will listen to the king, senor," replied the young woman.

"Good," said Mothril to himself, "I was sure that ambition would speak, if love would not. She loves this Frankish knight enough to seize the opportunity which presents itself of seeing him again; at this moment she sacrifices the monarch to the lover; perhaps, at a later period, I may be obliged to watch lest she should sacrifice the lover to the monarch."

"You do not then refuse to see the king, Donna Aissa?" said he.

"I shall be the respectful servant of his highness," said the young girl.

"Not so, for you are the king's equal, do not forget that. Only display no more of pride than of humanity. Adieu, I will acquaint the king that you consent to assist at the serenade which is given to him every evening. All the court will be there, and a good number of noble strangers. Adieu, Donna Aissa."

"Who knows, whether among these noble strangers, I may not see Agenor?" murmured the young girl to herself.

Don Pedro, the man of sudden and violent passions, blushed with joy, like a young novice, when, in the evening, he saw the beautiful Moresca approaching the balcony, her beauty shining through her gold embroidered veil and black eyes, and her pale complexion outvying the most perfect beauties that had yet been seen in Segovia.

Aissa appeared a queen accustomed to the homage of mankind. She did not lower her eyes, but often looked at Don Pedro, while searching the assembly with her eyes, and more than once during the evening, Don Pedro quitted his wisest counsellors, and his prettiest women, to whisper a word to the young girl, who replied without confusion, and without embarrassment; but, perhaps, with a little absence of mind, for, in fact, her thoughts were elsewhere.

Don Pedro gave her his hand to conduct her to her litter, and on the road did not cease speaking to her through the silken curtains.

All night the courtiers were engaged in conversation concerning the new mistress, whom the king proposed giving them; and, on retiring to rest, Don Pedro publicly announced that he would confide the conduct of negotiations, and the payment of the troops, to his prime minister, Mothril, the chief of the Moorish tribes engaged in his service.

"I am rarely wearied with your company, my good Musaron, and never with my own thoughts."

"Thank you, sir: but when I reflect that there are here no travellers suspected of disaffection, from whom we might carry off at the lance's point a good quarter of cold venison, or some bulky skinfull of those good wines which are grown on the sea-coast, I feel very much cast down."

"Ah! I understand, Musaron; you are hungry, and your bowels cry—'To the charge.'"

"Exactly so, master; but see below us, what an excellent road. Only to think that instead of roaming through these never-ending ravines and under these inhospitable birches we might, by following that track which makes a descent for about a league's extent, reach that table-land on which a church is visible. Look, sir, by the side of a good fat smoke: do you see it? Does nothing speak in favor of that church to so pious a knight, to so good a Christian as yourself? Oh! what fine smoke! it smells good even at this distance."

"Musaron," replied Agenor, "I, like yourself, have every inclination to change my diet and to perceive human beings; but I cannot expose my person to useless danger. Enough serious and indispensable peril awaits me in the accomplishment of my mission. These mountains are arid, they are deserted, but they are safe."

"Well, sir," resumed Musaron, who appeared determined not to surrender without fighting: "do me at least the favor of descending a third of the slope; there you can wait for me: and I, pushing forward to the smoke, will lay in some provisions which will help us to keep our patience. Two hours only, and I shall be back again. As to the track of my course, night will pass over it, and to-morrow we shall be far off."

"My dear Musaron," replied Agenor, "listen well to this."

The squire lent his ear with a shake of the head, as if he had foreseen that what his master begged him to listen to would not be in conformity with his ideas.

"I will permit no turns nor wanderings," continued Agenor, "until our arrival at Segovia. At Segovia, master sybarite, you shall have all that you can wish for; exquisite cheer, agreeable society. At Segovia, lastly, you will be treated like what you are, an ambassador's squire. But till then let us march straight on, if you please. Besides, is not that town which I perceive lower down in mist, and from the centre of which rises that fine church belfry and that dazzling dome, Segovia? To-morrow eve we shall be there. It is not, therefore, worth our while to turn aside from our way for so little."

"I will obey your lordship," resumed Musaron, in a mournful voice; "it is my duty, and I cherish my duty, but if I dared to permit myself a reflection, entirely in your lordship's interest—"

Agenor looked at Musaron, who replied to that look by a nod which signified, I adhere to what I have said.

"Speak on," said the young man.

"There is," said Musaron, "a proverb in my country, and consequently in yours, which advises the chime-ringer to sound the little bells before he tries the great."

"Well, what does that proverb signify?"

"It signifies, sir, that before making your entry into the great town of Segovia, it would be prudent to make experiment of all the small ones; then in all probability we shall learn some valuable truth concerning the state of affairs. Ah!

did your lordship only know all the truly happy auguries which I draw from the smoke of that borough."

Agenor was a man of good sense. Musaron's first reasons had weighed with him little, but the last touched him; further, he reflected that Musaron had the fixed idea of going to the neighboring borough, and that deranging his plan was deranging the well-regulated clock-work of his character, the effect of which might be to expose himself during an entire day to what is most odious under heaven, the ill-humor of a valet, a storm blacker and more inevitable than a tempest.

"Well," said he, "I consent to what you wish. Musaron; go and see what is passing round that smoke and return and tell me."

As from the commencement of the discussion Musaron had been pretty certain of leading his master as he chose, he received his permission without showing immoderate joy and started off at a trot.

Musaron then followed the turns of that little track which he had so long devoured with his eyes.

On his side Agenor, to await conveniently his squire's return, chose a charming amphitheatre of rocks interspersed with birches, the centre of which was carpeted with that soft moss which is only found in mountain regions, and where all those beautiful flowers which grow on the borders of precipices contend in rivalry of bloom; a spring transparent as a mirror slept for an instant in its natural basin, then fled sobbing among the stones.

Agenor quenched his thirst, then taking off his helmet, he threw himself down under the rustling freshness of the shade, at the mossy roots of an old green oak.

Soon, like a true knight of old fabliaux and romantic legends, the young man gave himself up to the sweet thoughts of love, which soon so completely possessed him, that he passed imperceptibly from reverie to ecstasy, and from ecstasy to sleep.

At Agenor's age one never sleeps without dreaming; therefore the young man was no sooner asleep than he dreamed that he had arrived at Segovia, that the king, Don Pedro, had laden him with chains and cast him into a narrow prison, through the bars of which appeared the beautiful Aissa.

But scarcely had the most lovely vision enlightened the darkness of his cell, when Mothrill came up to chase away the consoling image, and a conflict took place between the Moor and himself; in the midst of the contest, and when he felt that he was about to succumb, a gallop was heard, announcing the arrival of an un hoped for auxiliary.

The noise of this gallop persevered so in the dream that Agenor's senses were entirely possessed by it, and he awoke at the first accents of the horseman whom it had suddenly brought back to him.

"My lord, my lord," cried the voice.

Agenor opened his eyes; Musaron was before him.

It was a curious apparition, that of the worthy squire stuck up on his horse, whose motion he could only guide by his knees, for his arms were stretched out before him, as if he were playing at blindman's buff. For at his elbow joints he held suspended at one side a wine skin, bound by its four corners, on the other a linen parcel holding



smoked tongues and raisins, while with his hands he presented, like a pair of pistols, a fat goose and a loaf large enough to serve six men for supper.

"My lord, my lord," cried Musaron, as we have said, "great news!"

"What is it now?" exclaimed the knight, putting on his helmet, and laying his hand to the hilt of his sword, as if Musaron had preceded a hostile army.

"Oh! how happy an inspiration was mine," continued Musaron, "and only to think that had I not insisted, we should have gone straight away."

"What is it then, damned babbler!" cried Agénor, impatiently.

"What is it? It is that Providence led me to the village."

"But what did you learn there? Zounds! speak out."

"I learnt that the king, Don Pedro—the ex-king, Don Pedro, I mean —"

"Well?"

"Is no longer at Segovia."

"Indeed!" cried Mauléon, with vexation.

"No, my lord; the alcalde returned yesterday from an excursion he had made with the notables of the borough to meet Don Pedro, who passed yesterday through the plain below on his journey from Segovia."

"And whither bound?"

"To Soria."

"With his court?"

"With his court."

"And," continued Agenor, with hesitation, "with Mothril?"

"Certainly."

"And," stammered the young man, "with Mothril, doubtless, was——"

"His litter? I believe you; he never lets it

out of sight, except when he sleeps. Besides it is well guarded now."

"What mean you?"

"That the king never leaves it."

"What! the litter?"

"Yes, the litter; he escorts it on horseback, and it was by its side that he received the deputation from the borough."

"Well, my dear Musaron, let us go to Soria," said Mauléon, with a smile which ill-veiled a beginning of anxiety.

"Let us start then, my lord; but it is no longer fit to follow the same road; we are now turning our backs to Soria. I have obtained information at the borough: we must cross the mountain on the left, and we enter on a defile parallel to the plain. That defile will spare us the passage of two rivers and eleven leagues of road."

"So be it; I consent to take you as my guide, but remember the responsibility you are incurring, my poor Musaron."

"Reflecting on this responsibility, I will tell you, my lord, that you would have done better to pass the night at the borough. See the evening is coming, a fresh breeze rises; but one hour's march, and the darkness will envelope us."

"Let us turn the hour to good account, Musaron; and, as you are so well informed, show me the road."

"But your dinner, my lord," said Musaron, making a last attempt.

"Our dinner will take place when we have found a suitable resting place. Come, march, Musaron, march."

Musaron made no reply; there was in Agénor's voice a certain intonation, which he could recognise perfectly; when this intonation of voice accompanied any order, nothing more was to be said.

The squire by combinations, one more clever than the other, contrived to hold his master's stirrups without unloading his arms of any of the burthens they held and always loaded, mounting his horse again, by a miracle of equilibrium, he went on first and bravely plunged into the mountain gorge, which was to spare them the passage of two rivers, and abridge their road by eleven leagues.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW MUSARON FOUND A GROTTO, AND WHAT THERE WAS IN THAT GROTTO.

As Musaron had said, the travellers had about an hour more of day before them, and the last rays of the sun might guide them on their path, but from the moment that its paling flames had abandoned the loftiest peaks of the Sierra, the night began to arrive in its turn, with a rapidity the more alarming, as during the last hour of the day, Musaron and his master had remarked how precipitous and, therefore, how dangerous was the road they were following.

Therefore, after journeying about a quarter of an hour in the midst of this darkness, Musaron stopped short.

"Oh! oh! Seigneur Agénor," said he, "the road is becoming worse and worse, or rather there is no road at all. We shall certainly kill ourselves, my lord, if you insist on our going farther."

"The devil!" said Agénor. "I am not fastidious, you know, but yet, as a resting place, this seems to me somewhat too rural. See if we cannot get somewhat further."

"It is impossible; we are on a kind of platform, confined on all sides by a precipice; let us stop here, or rather halt for the present, and rely on my experience of mountains to find you a suitable resting-place for the night."

"Do you see now any good oily smoke?"

"No; but I scent a pretty grotto, with curtains of creeping plants, and lined with moss."

"Whence we should have to chase a whole world of owls, lizards, and serpents."

"Faith! that matters little, my lord; at this hour, and in the spot where we are, it is not anything that flies, scratches, or creeps, that can frighten me; it is what walks; besides, you are not superstitious enough to fear owls, and I do not think that lizards or vipers can well take a bite out of your iron legs."

"Well," said Agénor, "we will stop."

Musaron alighted, and fastened his horse's bridle to a rock, while his master, erect in his saddle, remained in expectation, like the equestrian statue of cool and collected Courage.

During this time the squire, with that instinct of which good will so much multiplies the power, began to explore the environs.

A quarter of an hour had not elapsed when he returned with his sword drawn, and the air of a conqueror.

"Here, my lord, this way," said he; "come and see our Alcazar."

"What the devil is the matter with you now?" said the knight; "you appear thoroughly steeped in water."

"The matter is, my lord, that I have fought against a forest of creeping plants, which strove to make me prisoner, but I struck so lustily with cut and thrust, that I opened a passage; then all the leaves, wet with dew, rained on my head, a dozen of bats made a sortie, and the place surrendered. Picture to yourself a fine gallery, with a soil of fine sand."

"Ah! indeed," said Agénor, following his squire, but doubting somewhat all these fine words.

Agénor was wrong to doubt. Scarcely had he made a hundred paces on a somewhat rapid slope, than at a spot where the road seemed closed by a wall, he began by feeling under his feet a carpeting of fresh leaves, an abattis of small branches, the result of the havoc made by Musaron; while here and there were passing great bats impatient to regain possession of their home, and only revealing their presence by the air which the silent beating of their wings wafted to the knight's face.

"Oh!" said Agénor, "this seems the cavern of the enchanter Maugis!"

"Discovered by me, my lord, and by me in the first instance. My word for it, no man has ever thought of putting his foot here! These creepers date from the commencement of the world."

"Very well," said Agénor, with a laugh; "but if this grotto is unknown to men —"

"Oh, I answer for that."

"Can you say as much for wolves?"

"Oh! oh!" cried Musaron.

"Or of the little red bears of the mountain breed, you know, such as are found in the Pyrenees?"

"The devil!"

"Or of those wild cats which rend the throats of sleeping travellers, to suck their blood?"

"Sir, do you know what we should do; one must watch during the other's sleep."

"It will be prudent."

"Now you have nothing further to say against the cavern of the enchanter Maugis?"

"Nothing whatever; I even find it somewhat agreeable."

"Well, then, let us go in," said Musaron.

"Let us go in."

Both alighted from horseback, and entered, cautiously feeling their way, the knight with his lance, the squire with his sword. After advancing twenty paces, they came on a solid impenetrable wall, which appeared formed by the rock itself without apparent cavity, and without a place of retreat for noxious animals.

This cavern was divided into two partitions: first, one came in under a kind of portico; then one pierced into the second excavation, which, after clearing a sort of gateway, retook its original height.

It was evidently one of those grottos which, in the first times of Christianity, were dwelt in by one of those pious hermits who had chosen seclusion as the road to lead them to heaven.

"God be praised!" said Musaron, "our sleeping room is safe."

"In that case drive the horses into the stable, and lay the table-cover," said Agénor; "I am hungry."

Musaron then led in the two horses to what his master called the stable; it was the porch of the grotto.

Then, this duty discharged, he proceeded to the more important preparations for supper.

"What are you saying?" asked Agénor, who heard him grumbling while executing the orders he had received.

"I am saying, sir, that I am a great fool for forgetting the wax candles to light us. Happily we have the means for lighting a fire."

"Can you mean that, Musaron? a fire?"

"The fire chases off ferocious animals, that is an axiom, the truth of which I have more than once had the opportunity of verifying."

"Yes, but it attracts men; and at this moment I avow it, I fear more the attack of an English or a Moorish band, than that of a flock of wolves."

"Ods' life!" said Musaron; "it is annoying, sir, however, to eat such good things without seeing them."

"Bah!" said Agénor, "a hungry belly has no ears: it is true, but it has eyes."

Musaron, always compliant, when one knew how to persuade him, or when one did what he desired, acknowledged this time the solidity of his master's reasons, and went to prepare the dinner at the door of the second cavern, so that a last glimpse from without might still reach him.

They began their meal immediately after the horses had obtained leave to plunge their heads into the bag of oats which Musaron carried on his crupper.

Agénor, a young and vigorous man attacked the provisions with an energy which might make a lover of our days blush, while the enthusiastic accompaniment of Musaron, who cracked the bones with the flesh, on the pretence that there was no seeing, might also be heard.

Suddenly, though the motion of Agénor continued, Musaron's accompaniment ceased.

"Well! how now?" asked the knight.

"My lord, I thought I heard something," replied Musaron, "but I was no doubt mistaken. It is nothing."

And he began to eat again.

But he soon stopped once more, and as his back

was turned to the opening, Agénor could remark that he was motionless.

"Well," said Agénor, "are you going mad?"

"Not so, my lord; not more than I am getting deaf. I hear something I tell you."

"Pshaw! you dream," said the knight, "'tis some forgotten bat beating the walls."

"Well," said Musaron, lowering his voice so much that his master could scarcely hear him, "I not only hear, but I see."

"You see?"

"Yes, and if you will turn round, you will see also."

The invitation was so positive, that Agénor briskly turned round. In fact, in the midst of the obscure recess of the cavern, sparkled a luminous ray, a light produced by some description of flame penetrated into the grotto, through the crevice of the rock.

The phenomenon was startling enough to any who could not immediately apply reflection to explain it.

"If we have no light," said Musaron, "they have."

"Who have?"

"Why our neighbours."

"You think then that this solitary grotto is inhabited?"

"I have only answered for this, but not for the next grotto."

"Come, explain yourself."

"Do you understand, my lord? We are on the crest of a mountain or thereabouts, and every mountain has two slopes."

"Very well."

"Follow my reasoning; this grotto has two entries. Chance has produced the ill-joined separation which we see. We have entered the grotto by the western entry, and they by the eastern."

"But who are they?"

"I know nothing of that. We shall see, my lord; you were right in objecting to our lighting a fire. I think your lordship is as prudent as you are brave, which is not saying a little. But let us have a look."

"Let us have a look," said Agénor.

And both plunged, not without some palpitation of heart, into the depths of the cavern.

Musaron went first; he arrived first, and was the first to place his eye to the crevice in the wall of rock.

"Look," said he, in a low voice, "it is well worth while."

Agénor looked in his turn and trembled.

"Hum!" said Musaron.

"No noise!" said Agénor in his turn.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE GIPSIES.

WHAT our travellers were contemplating with surprise, deserved the attention which they were paying. This is what the eye embraced through the crevice of rock.

Firstly, a cavern somewhat similar to that in which our travellers were; then in the centre of that cavern, two figures seated, or rather squatted, by a coffer placed on a stone; at one of the angles of this stone, one of the two figures was trying to fix a lighted taper, which, illumining the scene, flung out that light which had attracted the attention of the travellers.

These two figures were miserably dressed, and hooded with that thick veil of uncertain colour,

which distinguished the female gipsies of that day; they were therefore recognised by Agénor as two women of that wandering nation; by their demeanour and gestures, they appeared old women.

Two paces from them stood a third figure erect and pensive, but as the flickering light of the taper did not fall on the face, it was impossible to determine to what sex it belonged.

During this time the two first figures arranged some packets of clothes to serve as seats.

All this was poor, miserable, and ragged; the coffer alone was in contradiction with all this misery, it was in ivory incrustated with gold.

In the meantime, a fourth figure came in, advancing from the bottom of the grotto, first in darkness, then in shade, then in light.

It came near, bowed to one of the women who were sitting down, and spoke some words to her, which neither Agénor nor Musaron could understand.

The gipsy addressed, listened with attention, and then dismissed the new comer by a gesture.

Agénor remarked that this gesture was full of nobility and command.

The standing figure, after making a bow, followed the one who had spoken, and both disappeared in the depths of the grotto.

Then the woman of the imperious gesture arose in her turn, and placed her foot on the stone.

The actions of all these people could be clearly seen, but their words could not be heard, as they murmured confusedly through the grotto.

The two gipsy women remained alone.

"Let us wager, sir," said Musaron, in a whisper, "that these two old witches have three hundred years between them. Those gipsies live as long as crows."

"In fact," said Agénor, "they do not appear young."

During this time, the second woman instead of rising like the first, had knelt down, and was beginning to unlace the deerskin boot which enclosed the other's leg up to above the ankle.

"Faith," said Agénor, "look if you will, I shall retire; nothing is so ugly as an old woman's foot."

Musaron, more curious than his master, remained, while the knight made a movement in arrear.

"I faith, sir," said he, "I assure you that it is not so frightful as you would think."

"Oh! quite on the contrary, it is charming. Look sir, look I beg."

Agénor ventured to do so.

"In fact," said he, "it is extraordinary and the ankle is of exquisite perfection. Oh! what a fine race are these gipsies."

The old woman went to dip a linen cloth of the finest tissue into a water clear as crystal, and returned to wash her companion's foot.

Then she searched in the gold encrusted coffer, and drew from it perfumes with which she rubbed the foot, which the two travellers looked on with astonishment and admiration.

"Perfumes! balsams! do you see, sir, do you see?" exclaimed Musaron.

"What does this mean?" murmured Agénor, who saw the gipsy uncover a second foot not less white and delicate than the first.

"Sir," said Musaron, "it is the toilet of the queen of the gipsies, and see now they are undressing her."

In fact, the gipsy, after having washed, wiped, and perfumed the second foot, as she had done the first, passed on next to the veil, which she

took off with all possible precaution and an infinite expression of respect.

The veil, when it fell, instead of disclosing the wrinkles of a centenarian, as Musaron had predicted, revealed a charming face with brown eyes, a glowing skin, a nose modelled with all the purity of the Iberian race, and the two travellers were able to recognise a woman of from six to eight and twenty, in all the splendour of a marvellous beauty.

While the two spectators were absorbed in ecstasy, the old gipsy spread on the floor of the cavern, a carpet of camel's hair, which, although ten feet in length, would have passed through a young girl's ring; it was composed of that tissue of which at that time the Arabs alone had the secret, and which was woven with the hair of still-born camels. Then the first gipsy placed her two naked feet on the magnificent carpet, while the old gipsy, after having, as we said, removed the veil which covered her face, prepared to unloose that which covered her bosom.

So long as this last tissue remained in its place, Musaron held his breath, but when it fell, he could not abstain from uttering a cry of admiration.

At this cry, which no doubt was heard by the two women, the light became extinguished, and the most complete darkness buried the cavern, drowning in its gulfs, like those of oblivion, the reality of that mysterious scene.

Musaron felt that his master was aiming at him a violent kick, which by a skilful manœuvre executed in time, only reached the wall, accompanied by this energetic apostrophe—"Animal!"

He understood, or thought he understood that this was at once an order to regain his resting place and the chastisement of his indiscretion.

He therefore went to stretch himself in his cloak on the bed of leaves which he had taken care to prepare. At the end of five minutes, and when it was quite certain that the light would not be rekindled, Agénor went to lay down beside him.

Musaron thought that the moment had come to obtain forgiveness for his fault by showing his perspicuity.

"This is how it is," said he, replying aloud to what Agénor was doubtless saying to himself, "they were following, no doubt, on the other side of the mountain, a path parallel to ours, and they must have found on the opposite slope an opening corresponding to that of the cavern where we are, the middle being closed by a rock which the caprice of nature, or some fancy of man, has placed where it is, as a gigantic partition."

"Animal!" Agénor satisfied himself with saying a second time; but as this second apostrophe was pronounced in a milder tone, the squire perceived some amelioration.

"And now," said he, admiring his own infallible tact, "who were these women? gipsies no doubt. Yes, but why then these perfumes, these balsams, those very white feet, that beautiful face, and lovely bosom, which no doubt we were about to see, when, blockhead that I am"—Musaron hit himself a sound box on the ear.

Agénor could not avoid laughing. Musaron heard him.

"The queen of the gipsies," he continued, more and more satisfied with himself, "that is scarcely probable, although I see no other explanation to this really fairy vision, which I have dispelled through my stupidity. Oh! animal that I am!"

And he gave a box to the other ear.

Agénor understood that Musaron, not less curious than himself, had been struck with a true repentance. Besides the reparation was sufficient for the moment that Musaron had, on reflection, given himself the epithet which his master had applied to him in a fit of passion.

"What think you, sir, of these two women?" Musaron at length ventured to say.

"I think," said Agénor, "that those sordid habiliments of which the younger of the two was divesting herself, ill suit the brilliant beauty, of which, most unfortunately, we have but caught a glimpse."

Musaron heaved a deep sigh.

"And," continued Agénor, "that the balsams and perfumes of the box suit still less those dirty clothes, which makes me think——"

Agénor stopped.

"Oh, what do you think, sir?" asked Musaron; "I should be happy, I confess, to have on this occasion, the opinion of a knight so enlightened as yourself."

"Which makes me think," continued Agénor, yielding, like the crow in the fable, to the magic of praise, "that they are two travellers, of whom the one is rich and of high quality, journeying towards some distant town, and that the rich lady of rank has assumed that garb, and imagined that disguise, to avoid tempting the cupidity of thieves and the lewdness of soldiers."

"Wait, sir, wait," resumed Musaron, taking the place he was used to in the conversation; "may not she be one of those women whom the gipsies sell, and whose beauty they are careful of, just as horse-dealers dress and adorn the high-priced horses whom they lead from town to town?"

The initiation of thought and the plan of reasoning belonged that evening decidedly to Musaron. Therefore Agénor laid down his arms, thus giving to understand by his silence, that he acknowledged himself beaten.

The fact is, that Agénor, seduced, as every man of twenty-five, even with love at the bottom of his heart, must needs be by the sight of a pretty foot and a charming face, fell back into himself somewhat discontented at the bottom of his soul. For the opinion of the ingenious Musaron might be a sound one, and the mysterious beauty be no other than an adventuress, running across the country in the train of a troop of gipsies, and dancing, with her adorable white and delicate feet, the egg or the rope dance.

One thing only had conflicted with this probability: the respect both men and women had shown to the unknown; but Musaron in the argumentation of which the logic caused the knight to despair, had recalled some instances of merry-andrews very deferential for the favorite monkey of their company, or for the principal actor gaining the strolling troops subsistence.

The knight floated vexatiously in uncertainty, until sleep; that sweet companion of fatigue, took from him that faculty of thought which he had been using immoderately for some hours.

About four o'clock in the morning, the first beams of day cast a violet mantle over the walls of the grotto, and by their light Musaron awoke.

Musaron aroused his master.

Agénor opened his eyes, collected his spirits, and ran to the crevice of the rock.

But Musaron shook his head, which signified that he had been there on the first instance.

"There is no one there," he muttered: "no one."

In fact it was now light enough in the neighboring grotto, exposed to the rays of the rising sun, to distinguish objects; the grotto was evidently deserted.

The gipsy, a more early riser than the knight, had absconded with her companions; coffer, balsams, perfumes, all had disappeared.

Musaron, always occupied with matter-of-fact concerns, proposed to breakfast; but before he had developed the advantages of his proposition, he had gained the crest of the mountain; and from the height where, like a bird of prey, he was perched, he could discover the sinuosities of the mountain and the blue expanse of the valley.

On a platform, three quarters of a league about, from the height where Agénor was stationed, one might, with the vision of a bird such as he filled the place of, discern an ass, on which one person was riding, while three others were going on foot.

These four persons, who, notwithstanding the distance, were descried with some exactness by Agénor, could be no other than the four gipsies, who, regaining the road which the two travellers had taken the day preceding, appeared to follow the path which had been pointed out to Musaron as leading to Soria.

"Come, come, Musaron," he cried, "to horse, and spur on! They are our birds of the night—let us see what is their plumage by day."

Musaron, who felt within himself that he had many things to atone for, brought the knight his horse ready saddled, mounted his own, and followed Agénor, who put his steed to the gallop in silence.

In half an hour both were three hundred paces from the gipsies, whom a clump of trees momentarily concealed from them.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE QUEEN OF THE GIPSIES.

The gipsies had turned round two or three times, which proved that if they had been seen by the two travellers they had also seen them, which induced Musaron to suggest, but with unaccustomed timidity, the opinion that when the clump of trees was once turned, the little troop would no longer be perceived, as it would have disappeared in some road as of its own accord.

Musaron was not in a happy vein as to suppositions, for when the clump was past the gipsies were seen quietly pursuing their road.

However, Agénor remarked a change which had taken place; the woman whom he had seen afar off on the ass and whom he had not doubted to be the woman with white feet and the handsome face—this woman was going on foot, confounded with her companions, without her offering anything more remarkable than the others in her figure and demeanor.

"Halloa!" cried Agénor, "halloa! good people."

The men turned round, and they carried their hand to their waist, to which a long cutlass was hanging.

"My lord?" said the always prudent Musaron, "did you see?"

"Perfectly," replied Agénor.

Then turning to the gipsies:

"Oh! oh!" said he, "fear nothing. I come with friendly dispositions, and I am happy to tell you, en passant, my brave fellows, that were it otherwise, your cutlasses would be poor offensive

arms against my shield and cuirass, and poor defensive arms against my lance and sword. Now, this being laid down, where are you going, my masters?"

One of the men knit his brow and was about to reply with some harsh expression, but the other stopped him forthwith, and, quite on the contrary, politely replied:

"Is it in order that we may show you the road that you follow us, my lord?"

"Certainly," said Agénor, "without mentioning the desire which we have to be honoured by your company?"

Musaron made a most significant grimace.

"Well! my lord," replied the polite gipsy, "we are going to Soria."

"Thank you, that is a very happy coincidence; it is also to Soria that we are going."

"Unfortunately," said the gipsy, "your lordship travels faster than poor pedestrians."

"I have heard," replied Agénor, "that people of your nation might vie in fleetness with the swiftest horses."

"That is possible," replied the gipsy; "but not when they have two old women with them."

Agénor and Musaron exchanged a glance, which Musaron accompanied with a grimace.

"'Tis true," said Agénor, "and you travel but with a poor equipment. How can the women who accompany you bear so much fatigue?"

"They are accustomed to it, senor, and that for a long time, for they are our mothers; we gipsies are born to misfortune."

"Ah! your mothers," said Agénor; "poor women!"

For an instant the knight feared lest the beautiful gipsy had taken another road; but almost immediately he reflected on the woman whom he had seen mounted on the ass, and who had only alighted on perceiving himself. The steed was a humble one, but it sufficed to preserve from fatigue those little delicate and perfumed feet which he had seen the day before.

He approached the women; they doubled their pace.

"Let one of your mothers," said he, "mount the ass, the other shall get up on my crupper."

"The ass is laden with our baggage," said the gipsy, "and has quite enough to do as it is. As to your horse, senor, your excellency must jest, no doubt, as it is too noble and too spirited a steed for a poor old gipsy woman."

Agénor, during this colloquy, was scrutinising the two women, and on the feet of one he recognised the deer-skin half-boot which he had remarked the day before.

"'Tis she!" he murmured, certain this time that he was not deceived. "Come, come, good mother in the blue veil, accept the offer I make you; get up on my crupper, and if your ass carries weight sufficiently well, your companion shall mount behind my squire."

"Thanks, senor," replied the gipsy, with a voice the harmony of which dispelled the last doubts remaining in the mind of the knight.

"In truth," said Agénor, with an ironical accent, which made the two women tremble, and the men clutch their knives, "that is a sweet voice for an old woman."

"Senor!" said the gipsy, who had not yet spoken, in an angry voice.

"Oh! don't vex yourself," rejoined Agénor, calmly. "If, by your companion's voice I guess her to be young, and if, by the thickness of her

veil, I guess her to be beautiful, that is no reason for clutching hold of a knife."

The two men stepped forward, as if to protect their companion.

"Stop!" said the young woman imperiously.

The two men stopped.

"You are right, senor," she said. "I am young, and who knows perhaps even I am beautiful. But how does that interest you, I must ask, and why should you trouble me in my journey because I am twenty or twenty-five years younger than I appear?"

Agénor in fact had remained motionless at the accents of that voice which revealed the superior woman accustomed to command. Thus the education and character of the unknown were in harmony with her beauty.

"Senora," stammered the young man, "you are not mistaken, I am a knight."*

"You are a knight, so be it; but I am not a senora. I am a poor gipsy; a little less ugly perhaps than the women of my race."

Agénor made a gesture signifying his disbelief.

"Have you ever seen the wives of lords travelling on foot?" asked the unknown.

"Oh! this is a bad reason," replied Agénor, "for it is but an instant since you were upon the ass's back."

"I grant it," replied the young woman; "but at least you will confess that my dress is not that of a lady of quality."

"Ladies of quality sometimes disguise themselves, madame, when they have a motive for wishing to pass as women of low condition."

"Do you believe," said the gipsy, "that a woman of quality, accustomed to silk and velvet, would consent to enclose her feet in such a covering as that?" And she showed her half-boot of deer skin.

"Shoes† are taken off in the evening; and the delicate foot tired by the day's journey becomes refreshed by perfumes."

If the traveller's veil had been raised, Agénor might have seen the blood mantling her face and the fire of her eyes glowing amid a circle of purple.

"Perfumes," she murmured, looking anxiously at her companion, while Musaron, who had not lost a word of the dialogue, gave a sly smile.

Agénor did not try to confuse her any further.

"Madame," said he, "a very agreeable perfume exhales from your person; that is what I meant to say, and nothing further."

"I thank you for the compliment, sir knight. But since that is what you mean to say, and that only, you ought to be satisfied now that you have said it."

"That means that you order me to withdraw, does it not, madam?"

"That means that I recognise you, sir knight, as a Frenchman, by your accent, and above all by your remarks. Now it is dangerous to travel with Frenchmen, when one is only a poor young woman very sensible to courtesy."

"Then you insist that I should leave you?"

"Yes, sir knight, to my great regret, but I insist——"

The two servants on this reply of their mistress appeared ready to give effect to her decision.

"I will obey, senora," said Agénor; "not, be-

* Unless the dignity of knight is to be implied in the title senor there appears an oversight here.—TRANSLATOR

† It is a defect in the English language that there is no equivalent for the word "chaussure," implying every kind of covering for the feet.—TRANSLATOR.

lieve me, on account of the threatening air of your two companions, whom I should like to meet in less good company than yours, that I might teach them not to lay hold of their knives so often, but on account of the obscurity in which you wrap yourself, and which, doubtless, serves some project which I do not wish to thwart."

"You thwart no project, you risk the unveiling of no obscurity, I assure you," said the fair traveller.

"Enough, madam," said Agénor; "besides," he added, somewhat galled by the little effect which his good looks had produced; "besides, the slowness of your pace would prevent me from arriving as speedily as the urgency of the case requires, at the king, Don Pedro's court."

"Ah! you are going to the court of Don Pedro?" exclaimed the young woman, with vivacity.

"I am so, senora, and I take my leave of you, wishing all manner of prosperity to your amiable person."

The young woman appeared to take a sudden resolution, and raised her veil.

The coarseness of the frame served only to set off the beauty of the face and the elegance of the features; she had a winning look and a laughing mouth.

Agénor stopped his horse, which had already made a pace forward.

"I see, sir," said she, "that you are a delicate and discreet knight, for you have guessed, perhaps, who I am, and yet you have not persecuted me, as another would have done in your place."

"I did not guess who you were, madame; but I guessed what you were not."

"Well! sir knight, as you are so courteous," said the fair traveller, "I will tell you the whole truth."

At these words the two servants exchanged looks of astonishment; but the pretended gipsy continued, with a smile.

"I am the wife of one of Don Pedro's officers, and having been nearly a year separated from my husband, who followed the prince to France, I am trying to rejoin him at Soria; now you know that the soldiers of both parties are in the field, and I should be an important capture for those of the pretender; I have, therefore, taken this disguise to escape from them until I have rejoined my husband."

"Very well," said Agénor, convinced now of the young woman's veracity. "Well, senora, I should have offered you my services but for the exigencies of my mission, which requires the greatest celerity."

"Listen, sir," said the beautiful traveller; "now that you know who I am, and I who you are, I will go as quickly as you please, if you will permit me to place myself under your protection, and to travel with your escort."

"Ah! ah!" said Agénor, "you have changed your opinion, madame?"

"Yes, senor; I have reflected that I might meet people as clear-sighted, and less courteous, than yourself."

"Then, madame, how shall we manage, unless you accept my first proposition?"

"Oh! do not judge my beast by his appearance; humble as he is, my ass, like your horse, is one of breeding; it comes from the stables of Don Pedro, and might sustain a comparison with the fleetest courser."

"But your followers, madame?"

"Could not your squire take my nurse on his crupper? my servants will follow on foot."

"It would be better, madame, for you to leave your ass to your two servants, who would make use of it by turns, for your nurse, as you propose, to mount behind my squire, and yourself, as I said, behind me. Thus we should make a respectable troop."

"Well, it shall be as you say," said the lady. And almost immediately, with the lightness of a bird, the fair traveller vaulted on the crupper of Agénor's horse.

The two men placed the nurse in her turn behind Musaron, who smiled no longer.

One of the two men mounted on the other, the other took it by the crupper of which he made a support, and all went off at a brisk trot.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW AGENOR AND THE FAIR UNKNOWN JOURNEYED TOGETHER, AND OF THE THINGS THEY SAID ON THE WAY.

It is very difficult for two young, good looking, and lively beings, who hold in one embrace and partake on the same beast the jolting and inequalities of the road—it is difficult for such beings, we say, not to become quickly intimate.

The young woman began by questions; she had the right, as a woman, to do so.

"Thus, sir knight," she said, "I guessed rightly, and you are a Frenchman."

"Yes, madam."

"And you are going to Soria?"

"Oh! that you did not guess; I told you so."

"Agreed. To offer, no doubt, your services to the king, Don Pedro?"

Agénor reflected before replying categorically to this question, that he was conducting this woman to Soria, that he should see the king before she did; and that, consequently, he had no indiscretion to dread; besides, he had many things to say before telling the truth.

"Madam," said he, "this time you are mistaken. I am not going to offer my services to Don Pedro, as I am a follower of Prince Henry of Transtamara, or rather of the constable, Bertrand Duguesclin, and am bearing to the vanquished king propositions of peace."

"To the vanquished king!" exclaimed the young woman, with a haughty accent, which she immediately suppressed and modified into surprise.

"Vanquished, no doubt," replied Agénor, since his competitor has been crowned king in his stead."

"Ah! 'tis true," said the young woman, carelessly; "then you are bearing to the conquered monarch propositions of peace?"

"Which he will do well to accept," resumed Agénor, "for his cause is lost."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Why so?"

"Because ill surrounded; and, above all, ill-advised as he is, it is impossible that he should resist."

"Ill surrounded?"

"No doubt: his subjects, his friends, his mistress, every one around him betray, plunder, and urge him to evil."

"Thus his subjects——?"

"Abandon him."

"His friends——?"

"Plunder him."

"And his mistress?" said the young woman, with hesitation.

"His mistress urges him to evil," replied Agénor.

The young woman frowned, and something like a cloud passed over her forehead.

"You mean, no doubt, to speak of the Moorish woman?" she asked.

"What Moorish woman?"

"The king's new passion."

"What is your meaning," asked Agénor, his eyes sparkling in their turn.

"Have you not heard," asked the young woman, "that the king, Don Pedro, is madly in love with the Moor Mothril's daughter?"

"With Aïssa?" exclaimed the knight.

"You know her?" said the young woman.

"No doubt."

"How, then, can you be ignorant that the infamous misbeliever is trying to push her into the king's bed."

"A moment!" exclaimed the knight, turning round, pale as death, towards his companion; "a moment; do not speak thus of Aïssa, unless you wish our friendship to die before it is born."

"But how would you, senor, that I should speak otherwise, since I tell you nothing but truth? This Moresca is, or is about to become, the avowed mistress of the king, since he accompanies her everywhere, walks by the door of her litter, since he gives her concerts, *fêtes*, and brings his court around her."

"You know all that?" said Agénor, in a tremor, for he remembered the report which the alcalde had made to Musaron; "this journey of Don Pedro, by Aïssa's side, is then true?"

"I know many things, sir knight," said the fair traveller; "for we people of the king's household soon learn all the news."

"Oh! madam, you wound me to the heart," said Agénor. Youth in him unfolded all its flowers, composed of the two most delicate substances of the soul—credulity to listen and candour in discourse.*

"I wound you to the heart!" said the fair traveller; "do you then, perchance, know this woman?"

"Alas! I love her to distraction, madam," said the knight in despair.

The young woman made a gesture of compassion.

"But she," she said, "does not love you?"

"She told me that she loved me. That traitor Mothril must have employed with her either force or magic!"

"He is a great villain," said the young woman, coolly, "and one who has already done the king much harm. But with what view do you think that he acts?"

"It is very plain; he wishes to supplant Donna Maria Padilla."

"Then that is your opinion also?"

"Assuredly, madam."

"But," resumed the lady, "it is said that Donna Maria is much in love with the king; do you believe that she will suffer Don Pedro to abandon her thus."

"She is a woman, she is weak, she will fall as Donna Bianca fell, but the death of the one was a murder, the death of the other will be an expiation."

"An expiation! Then, according to your opinion Maria Padilla has something to expiate?"

"I do not speak according to my own opinion only, madam but that of all the world."

"Then you think that Maria Padilla will not be pitied, as they pitied Blanche of Bourbon?"

"Certainly not; although when both are dead, it is probable that the mistress will have been unhappy as the wife."

"Then you pity her for your part?"

"Yes; although I should pity her less than any one."

"And why so?" asked the young woman, fixing on Agénor her large black eyes.

"Because it was she, they say, who counselled the king to assassinate Don Frederick, and because Don Frederick was my friend."

"Are you perchance," asked the young woman, "the French knight to whom Don Frederick assigned a rendezvous?"

"Yes, and to whom the dog brought his master's head."

"Sir knight! sir knight!" exclaimed the young woman, grasping Agénor's wrist, "listen well to me: on the salvation of her soul, on the part that Maria Padilla hopes for in Paradise, it was not she who gave this counsel to the king, it was Mothril."

"But she knew that the murder was about to take place, and she did not oppose it."

The lady was silent.

"It is enough cause for God to punish her, or rather she will be punished by Don Pedro* himself. Who knows whether it is not because his brother's blood has passed between him and that woman, that he already loves her less."

"Perhaps you are in the right," said the unknown, with a sonorous voice; "but patience! patience!"

"You appear to hate Mothril, madame?"

"Mortally."

"What has he done to you?"

"He has done to me what he has done to every Spaniard; he has alienated the king from his people."

"Women rarely devote to a man, for a political cause, such a hatred as you appear to have vowed against Mothril."

"It is also because I have personal reason to complain of him: during a month he has prevented me from rejoining my husband."

"How has he done that?"

"He has established such a system of inspection around the king, Don Pedro, that no message nor messenger can reach him, or those who attend him; thus I have dispatched to my husband two emissaries who have not returned; so that I am ignorant whether I can enter Soria, or whether you yourself—"

"Oh, I shall be able to enter, for I come as an ambassador."

The young woman shook her head ironically. "You will enter if it so please him," she said with a voice rendered hoarse by strong internal emotion.

Agénor extended his hand and showed the ring which Henry of Transtamara had given him.

"This is my talisman," said he.

It was an emerald ring of which the stone was held by two E's† intertwined.

* There is no mutual exclusion in these two ideas.
TRANSLATOR.

† This might be supposed to stand for the initial letter of the name of 'Enrique,' but it seems it is that for Eleonora, the name of the Princes' mother, or for those names intertwined.

* La naïveté pour parler. Naïveté is instinctive candour mixed with simplicity, and is one of those words which have no exact equivalent in English.



"Yes, in fact," said the young woman, "perhaps you may succeed in forcing the guard."

"If I succeed in forcing the guard you will succeed also, for you belong to my suite, and they will respect you."

"You promise me then, that, if you enter, I shall enter with you?"

"I swear it to you, on my knightly faith."

"Well! I adjure you, in exchange for that oath, to tell me whatever will most please you at this moment?"

"Alas, what I most desire, you cannot grant me."

"Say on, what matters."

"If I get into the town, you shall see her and speak to her."

"Thanks; oh, how grateful I will be to you."

"Who tells you that you will not, after all, have done far more for me?"

"Yet, it is life which you restore me."

"And you will have restored me more than life," said the young woman with a peculiar smile.

As on finishing this interchange of confessions and ratifying this treaty of alliance, they arrived at the village where they were to stop, the fair traveller lightly vaulted down from Agénor's horse, and as this association of Christians and gipsies might be remarked upon as singular, they agreed to meet again next day on the road about a league from the village.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE VARLET.

On the morrow, although the knight rose very early, he yet found, at a league from the village, the gipsies breakfasting at a fountain, at the distance agreed on from the spot he had just left.

The same arrangements were made as the preceding day, and the same order of march resumed.

The day passed in conversation, in which Musaron and the nurse took an active part; yet notwithstanding all that was graceful and varied in the conversation of these two important personages, we shall abstain from reporting it, Musaron having only succeeded in learning from the old woman what the young one had said the day before.

At last they arrived within sight of Soria. It was a town of the second order; but at that warlike epoch even second-rate towns were surrounded with walls.

"Madam," said Agénor, "there is the town; if you think that the Moor is as watchful as you said, do not think he will confine his inspection to gates and wickets; he will have scouts in the plain. I therefore recommend you to commence taking your precautions now."

"I was thinking of doing so," said the young woman, looking around her as if to reconnoitre the localities; "and if you will ride forward with your squire, so as however not to go too fast, my precautions shall be taken before a quarter of an hour has elapsed."

Agénor obeyed. The young woman alighted, leading her nurse into the depth of a thicket, while the two men remained guarding the road.

"Come, come, do not turn your head round so, sir squire, and imitate the discretion of your master," said the nurse to Musaron, who resembled one of those damned souls in Dante, whose dislocated head always looks backward, while their bodies walk forward.

But notwithstanding this warning, Musaron could not persuade himself to turn his eyes elsewhere, so invincible was his curiosity.

In fact he had seen the two women disappear, as we have said, in a grove of chesnut trees and holm oaks.

"Decidedly, sir," said he to Agénor, when he was well convinced that his eyes could not pierce the leafy veil in which the women had wrapped themselves, "decidedly I am very much afraid that our companions, instead of being great ladies as we have supposed, will, after all, turn out to be nothing but gipsies."

Unfortunately for Musaron, that was no longer his master's opinion.

"You are a babbler, rendered bold by my good nature," said Agénor; "hold your peace."

Musaron was silent.

After a few minutes journey at so slow a pace that they scarcely made half a quarter of a league, they heard a shrill and prolonged cry; it was the nurse who was calling them. They turned round and saw a young man coming towards them, dressed in the Spanish fashion, and bearing on his left shoulder the little cloak of a varlet of horses: he was making signs with his hat that they were to wait for him.

In an instant he was close to them.

"Here I am, sir knight," said he to Agénor, who, with much surprise, recognised his travelling companion; her black hair was hidden under a light wig, her shoulders, which seemed broader under the cloak, appeared to belong to a lusty youth, her step was bold, her complexion even appeared browner since she had changed the colour of her hair.

"You see that my precautions are taken," continued the young woman, and your varlet may, without difficulty, I think, enter the town with you."

And she jumped with the agility which Agénor had already remarked, behind Musaron.

"But your nurse?" asked the knight.

"She will remain with my two male servants at

the neighbouring village, until the time comes for their rejoining me."

"Then all is well; let us enter the town."

Musaron and the varlet preceded their master, who went straight towards the principal gate of Soria, which was already perceived at the end of an avenue of old trees.

But they had not gone two-thirds the length of this avenue, when they were surrounded by a troop of Moors, sent against them, as soon as they had been descried by the sentinels on the ramparts.

Agénor was questioned as to the object of his journey.

No sooner had he declared that his object was to have an interview with Don Pedro than the troop made them prisoners, and led them to the warder of the gate, an officer chosen by Mothril himself.

"I come," said Agénor, on being again questioned, "on behalf of the constable, Bertrand Duguesclin, to confer with your prince."

At this name, which all Spain had learnt to respect, the officer appeared disquieted.

"And who are those who accompany you?" he asked.

"You see; my squire and my varlet."

"'Tis well, remain here, and I will refer your demand to the Senor Mothril."

"Do what you will," said Agénor; "but I warn you that I do not intend to speak in the first instance to the Senor Mothril, nor to any other than the king, Don Pedro; beware, therefore, of prolonging an interrogatory, at which I shall take offence."

The officer bowed.

"You are a knight," he said, "and, as such, you must know that the commands of a chief must be implicitly obeyed; I must perform what I am enjoined to do."

Then turning round—

"Go and acquaint his highness, the prime minister, that a stranger desires to speak with the king on behalf of the constable, Bertrand Duguesclin."

Agénor turned his eyes towards his varlet, whom he found looking very pale and anxious. Musaron, more accustomed to adventures, did not tremble for so little.

"Comrade," said he to the young woman, "I will tell you how your precautions will succeed; you will be recognised in spite of your disguise, and we shall both be hung as your accomplices; but what does it matter, if it suits my master to have it so."

The unknown smiled—a moment had sufficed her to recover her presence of mind—a proof that she also was not wholly a stranger to peril.

She sat down a few paces from Agénor, and appeared wholly indifferent to whatever was about to take place.

The travellers having passed through two or three rooms full of soldiery, were at that moment in a guard-room, situated in the most solid part of a tower, and which had but one doorway.

All eyes were fixed on this door by which Mothril was expected to enter from one moment to another.

Agénor continued conversing with the officer; Musaron engaged in conversation with some Spaniards who spoke to him of the constable, and of their friends, in the service of Don Henry of Transtamara.

The varlet was also laid hold of by the pages of the governor, who led him up and down like a boy of no account.

Mauleon was the only person watched with real care; and he had, by his courtesy, put the officer's command completely at his ease; besides, what could one man do against two hundred.

The Spanish officer offered fruits and wine to the French knight: the governor's attendants crossed the ranks of guards to wait on him.

"My master is accustomed to take nothing, unless from my hands," said the young varlet; and he accompanied the pages to the apartments.

At the moment the sentinel was heard calling the guard to arms, and the cry of "Mothril! Mothril!" resounded through the depths of the guard room.

All rose up.

Agénor felt a shudder pass through his veins. He lowered his visor, and through its iron bars sought to discover the young varlet to reassure him; he was no longer there.

"Where is our travelling companion?" asked Agénor of Musaron, in a whisper.

Musaron replied in French with perfect calmness.

"My lord, she thanks you much for the service you have done her in procuring her entry into Soria; she has charged me to tell you that she is extremely grateful for it, and that you will soon perceive the proof that she is so."

"What are you saying?" said Agénor, with surprise.

"What she told me to let you know on leaving."

"On leaving!"

"Faith, yes," said Musaron, "she has gone. An eel would glide less quickly through the meshes of a net than she has passed through the guards of the post. I saw from afar the plume of her white cap flying through the shade; then, as I have learned nothing since, I presume that she is saved."

"God be praised!" said Agénor, "but be silent."

In fact, the footsteps of a great number of horsemen resounded through the neighboring rooms.

Mothril entered hurriedly.

"What is it?" asked the Moor, casting round him a clear and penetrating look.

"This knight," said the officer of the tower, "sent by Missire Bertrand Duguesclen, constable of France, wishes to speak with the king, Don Pedro."

Mothril approached Agénor, who, with his visor lowered, appeared an iron statue.

"Look at this," said Agénor, drawing off his gauntlet, and showing the emerald ring which the prince had given him as a passport.

"What is that?" asked Mothril.

"An emerald ring, which comes from Donna Eleanora, the mother of the prince."

Mothril bowed.

"What, then, are your wishes?"

"I will tell them to the king."

"You desire to see his highness?"

"I insist on it."

"You use high language, sir knight."

"I speak in the name of my master, the king, Don Henry of Transtamara."

"Then you will wait in this fortress."

"I will wait. But I warn you I wait not long."

Mothril smiled ironically.

"Good, sir knight," said he, "wait then."

And he left, after bowing to Agénor, whose eyes darted glances of fire through the iron bars of his helmet.

"Keep a good watch," whispered Mothril to

the officer, "they are important prisoners, and you will be responsible for their safe custody to me."

"How shall I dispose of them?"

"I will tell you to-morrow; in the meantime, let him have no communication with any one. Do you hear?"

The officer bowed.

"Decidedly," said Musaron, with the greatest calmness, "I think we are lost, and that this stone box will serve as our coffin."

"What a capital opportunity I had for strangling the miscreant!" exclaimed Agénor; "if I had only not been an ambassador," he muttered.

"One of the drawbacks of greatness," said Musaron, philosophically.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ORANGE BRANCH.

AGÉNOR and his squire passed a very ill night in their provisional prison. The officer, in obedience to Mothril's orders, had not made his appearance again.

Mothril had intended to return the following morning, having been acquainted with the capture of the prisoners at the moment he was about to accompany Don Pedro to a bull-fight; he had all the night before him to think of what he had to do; then if nothing was determined on in his mind, a second interrogatory would decide the fate both of the ambassador and his squire.

It is possible that the envoy of the constable might be authorized by Mothril to appear in Don Pedro's presence, but only in case Mothril had previously, by some means or other, learned the object of his mission.

The great secret of political improvisadores is generally to know in advance the matters on which they are about to improvise.

On quitting the two prisoners, Mothril took, therefore, the road to the amphitheatre, where, as we have said, the king, Don Pedro, was giving his court the spectacle of a bull-fight.

This exhibition, which generally takes place at day, was, on this occasion, given by night, which doubled its magnificence; three thousand flambeaux of perfumed wax illumined the arena.

Aïssa, seated on the king's right hand, and surrounded by courtiers, who adored in her the new star in favor; Aïssa looked without seeing, and listened without understanding.

The king, gloomy and preoccupied, questioned the countenance of the young girl, to read there that hope which was constantly awakened by the unchanging paleness of that clear forehead, and the fixedness of those eyes of veiled glow.

Don Pedro, that untamed heart, that fiery temperament, resembled the courser held in by the curb, and whose impatience bursts forth in quiverings of which beholders vainly seek the cause.

Then suddenly his forehead became darkened.

It was that while looking on the young girl's icy features his thoughts turned to the ardent mistress whom he had left at Sevilla—to that Maria Padilla—whom Mothril said was as faithless and changeable as fortune; and who, by her silence made Mothril's supposition reasonable. there was a twofold suffering in that present coldness of Aïssa, and that by-gone love of Donna Maria.

Then as he thought of that woman, for whom

he had an adoration so deep, that it was attributed to magic, a bitter sigh burst from his breast, and, like the blast of a tempest, caused all the foreheads of the attentive courtiers to be lowered.

It was at one of these moments that Mothril entered the royal box, to learn, by a scrutinizing glance, what was the mental state of its tenants.

He understood that a storm was raging in Don Pedro's breast; he guessed that Aïssa's coldness was the cause, and he cast a look of menace and hatred on the young girl, who remained perfectly calm, although she had well understood him.

"Ah! there you are, Mothril," said the king: "you come out of season. I am wearied."*

The intonation with which these words were pronounced, almost gave them the sonorous ferocity of a roar.

"I bring your highness news," said Mothril.

"Important?"

"No doubt; should I trouble my king upon trifling matters?"

"Speak then."

The minister leaned towards Don Pedro's ear.

"The matter concerns an embassy which the French are about to send you."

"See, Mothril," said the king, without appearing to understand what the Moor was saying; "see how Aïssa is displeased with our court. Really I think you would do well to send back this young girl to her country, Africa, which she appears so much to regret."

"Your highness is mistaken," said Mothril; "Aïssa was born in Granada, and not knowing the country of her ancestors, which she never saw, she cannot regret it."

"Does she then regret anything else?" said Don Pedro, growing pale.

"I think not."

"But then, had she nothing to regret, she would act differently from what she does; at sixteen years of age, one should talk, laugh, and live; truly, this young girl appears dead."

"You know, sir, that none are so grave, none so chaste and reserved as the young girls of the east: for, as I have told you, although born at Granada, she is of the pure blood of the prophet: Aïssa bears on her forehead a painful crown—that of misfortune—not for her, therefore, are the careless smile, the wordy hilarity of the woman of Spain; having never heard laughing or talking about her, she cannot do like a Spanish girl, and give back the echo of a noise she does not know."

Don Pedro bit his lips, and fixed his glowing eye on Aïssa.

"One day does not change a woman," continued Mothril; "and those who hold long to their dignity, hold also long to their affection. Donna Maria almost offered herself to you, and Donna Maria has forgotten you."

At the moment Mothril pronounced these words a branch of orange flowers, thrown from the higher galleries, fell on Don Pedro's knees with the directness of an arrow aimed to the mark. He leant forward to see where the missive came from.

Don Pedro picked up the branch; a letter was attached to it. Mothril made a movement to seize it, but Don Pedro extended his hand.

The courtiers cried out at the insolence.

*There is, as has been often remarked, no English word the least equivalent to *eunui*, or its corresponding verb and adjective, though the thing in England is understood and carried to a perfection quite proverbial. "Bored" is too modern and vulgar to be put into Don Pedro's mouth. I have therefore chosen "wearied" to signify the potent verb *je m'ennuie*.—TRANSLATOR.

"It is to me," he said, not to you, that the note is addressed."

And he unfolded the note.

At the bare view of the writing, he uttered an exclamation; at the first lines he read, his countenance cleared up.

Mothril followed the effects of this perusal with anxiety.

Suddenly, Don Pedro rose up.

The courtiers rose, ready to accompany the king.

"Remain," said Don Pedro; "the entertainment is not over; I desire that you will stop."

Mothril not knowing what to think of this unexpected event, attempted to follow his master.

"Remain!" said the king; "I will it so."

Mothril having re-entered the box, remained with the courtiers lost in conjectures upon this strange occurrence.

He caused the author of this daring act to be sought everywhere; but the search was ineffectual.

On his return to the palace, Mothril questioned Aïssa, but she had neither seen nor remarked anything.

He endeavoured to enter Don Pedro's apartment; the doors were closed to all.

The Moor passed a terrible night. For the first time in his life, an event of high importance escaped his sagacity; without being able to fix any probable foundation for the fear, his presentiments told him that his influence had just received a rude shock.

Mothril had not yet closed his eyes, when Don Pedro caused him to be summoned; he was introduced to the most remote apartment in the palace.

Don Pedro left his room to meet the minister, and on leaving carefully closed the door after him.

The king was paler than usual, but it was not vexation which gave him that appearance of fatigue; on the contrary, a smile of intimate satisfaction was on his lips, and there was something in his look more mild and more joyful than usual.

He sat down, making a friendly sign of the head to Mothril, and yet Mothril thought he remarked on his countenance a firmness foreign to their general relations.

"Mothril," said he, "you spoke to me yesterday of an embassy sent by the French?"

"Yes, my lord," said the Moor, "but as you did not reply, I did not deem it fit to urge the matter further."

"Besides, you were in no eagerness to confess, were you," resumed Don Pedro, "that you had them shut up during the night in the tower of the Lower Gate?"

Mothril trembled.

"How do you know it, sire?" he muttered.

"I know it; that is enough; and all that is important. Who are these strangers?"

"Frenchmen, as I suppose."

"And why do you shut them up, since they say that they are ambassadors?"

"They say so: that is all," answered Mothril, to whom a moment was sufficient to recover his self-possession.

"And you, you affirm the contrary, do you not?"

"Not precisely, sire; for in fact I am ignorant whether——"

"If the matter is doubtful, you ought not to have arrested them."

"Then your highness orders——"

"That they be instantly brought before me."

The Moor started back.

"But it is impossible," he said.

"By the blood of our Lord, has anything happened to them?" said Don Pedro.

"No, sire."

"Then hasten to repair your fault, for you have violated the rights of nations."

Mothril smiled.

He knew the respect which Don Pedro, in his hatred had for that right of nations which he was invoking at that moment.

"I will not allow," said he, "that my king should expose himself without defence to the danger which threatens him."

"Fear not for me, Mothril," said Don Pedro, stamping with his foot; "fear for yourself."

"I have nothing to fear, having nothing to reproach myself with," said Mothril.

"Nothing to reproach yourself with, Mothril? Recall your recollections."

"What does your highness mean?"

"I mean that you love not ambassadors, not more those who come from the west, than those who come from the east."

Mothril began to feel some anxiety; by degrees the examination was taking a threatening turn; but as he did not yet know from what quarter the attack would come, he held his tongue and waited.

The king continued—

"This is the first time that you arrest the messengers who are sent to me, Mothril?"

"The first time?" replied the Moor, staking all for all, "a hundred have, perhaps, come, and I have not allowed one to pass."

The king arose in a fury.

"If I have committed an error," continued the Moor, "in keeping away from the palace of my king, assassins hired by Henry de Trans-tamara, or the Constable, Bertrand Duglesclin—if I have sacrificed some innocent among so many guilty persons—my head is here to pay the fault of my heart."

The king sat down, and as he seated himself, said:

"'Tis well, Mothril; in favor of the excuse which you have given me, and which may be true, I pardon you: but let this happen no more, and let every messenger sent to me, reach me; do you hear? whether he come from Seville or from Burgos, matters little. As to the Frenchmen, that they are really ambassadors I know; consequently I will treat them like ambassadors. Let them, therefore, be instantly led from the tower; let them be conducted with the honors due to their office, into the best house in the town; to-morrow I will receive them in solemn audience in the great hall of the palace. Go."

Mothril bowed his head, and left, crushed by surprise and terror.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE AUDIENCE.

AGÉNOR and his faithful squire were deploring their condition, each in his own way.

Musaron was remarking to his master that he had foreseen all that happened.

Agénor replied, that though he had known what was to happen, it was not the less his duty to perform his mission.

To which Musaron replied, that some ambassadors had been seen suspended to gibbets somewhat higher, but certainly not less disagreeable than those of smaller dimensions.

To which Mauleon could find no answer at all.

The expeditious justice of Don Pedro was known—when so little importance is attached to men's lives, action is always quick.

The two prisoners, therefore, remained occupied with these gloomy thoughts, and Musaron was already examining the stones of the wall, to see if none was about to be unfastened, when Mothril appeared at the entrance of the guard-room, followed by an escort of captains, whom he left at the door.

"Frenchmen," said Mothril, "answer me, do not lie; that is if you can speak without lying."

"You judge others from yourself, Mothril," said Agénor, who, though he did not wish to make his position worse by yielding to angry impulse, yet felt an instinctive repugnance to allow himself to be insulted by the man whom he hated beyond all others in the world.

"What mean you, dog?" said Mothril.

"You call me dog, because I am a Christian; then your master is a dog also, is he not?"

The retort struck the Moor.

"Who speaks of my master and his religion?" he answered; "do not mix your name with his, nor think you resemble him, because you adore the same God as he does."

Agénor sat down, shrugging his shoulders.

"Is it to tell me these absurdities, that you come, Mothril?" asked the knight.

"No, I have questions of importance to ask you."

"Go on."

"First confess how you found means to correspond with the king."

"With what king?" asked Agénor.

"I only acknowledge one, envoy of the rebels, and that is the king, my master."

"Don Pedro. You ask how I have succeeded in corresponding with Don Pedro?"

"Yes."

"I do not understand you."

"Do you deny having asked an audience with the king?"

"No, since I made that demand of yourself."

"Yes, but it was not I who transmitted that demand to the king, and yet——"

"And yet," repeated Agénor.

"He knew of your arrival."

"Ah!" said Agénor, with a stupefaction which was echoed by the still louder "ah!" of Musaron.

"Then you confess nothing?" said Mothril.

"What would you have me confess?"

"The means by which you have contrived to correspond with the king."

Agénor shrugged his shoulders a second time.

"Ask your guards," said he.

"Do not think, Christian, to obtain anything from the king, unless with my consent."

"Ah!" said Agénor, "I shall see the king, then."

"Hypocrite!" said Mothril, in a rage.

"Good," said Musaron; "it appears that we shall not find it necessary to make a hole in the wall."

"Silence," said Agénor.

Then, turning towards Mothril—

"Well," said he, "since I shall speak to the king, we shall see, Mothril, if my word will have as little weight as you suppose."

"Confess what you did to make the king acquainted with your coming; tell me the conditions on which you come to propose peace, and you shall have all my support."

"Why should I purchase a support of which

your very anger teaches me that I do not stand in need?" said Agénor with a smile.

"At least show me your face!" exclaimed Mothril, disquieted by that laugh, and by the sound of that voice.

"You will see me before the king," said Agenor—"to the king I will speak with my face and heart uncovered."

Suddenly Mothril struck his forehead and looked around the room.

"You had a page," he said.

"Yes."

"What has become of him?"

"Seek, ask, question, you have the right to do so."

"That is why I question you."

"Let us understand each other—you have that right over your officers, your soldiers, and your slaves, but not over me."

Mothril turned round towards his followers.

"There was a page with the Frenchmen," he said; "obtain information as to what has become of him."

There was an instant's silence while the search was being made; each of the three persons chiefly concerned waited the result of these inquiries with a different bearing. Mothril, full of agitation, walked before the door like a sentinel before his post, or rather like a hyena in its den; Agénor remained seated, motionless and silent; Musaron attentive to all things, was as mute as his master, but devoured the Moor with his eyes.

The reply brought was that the page had disappeared on the preceding day, and had not been seen since.

"Is it true?" asked Mothril of Agénor.

"Faith!" said the knight, "they are people of your own belief who tell it you. Do the infidels then also lie?"

"But why did he fly?"

Agénor understood all.

"No doubt that he might go and tell the king that his master was arrested," was the reply.

"One does not so easily reach the king when Mothril watches round him," replied the Moor.

Then suddenly striking his forehead:

"Oh! that branch of orange flowers!" he said, "oh, that note!"

"The Moor is certainly going mad," said Musaron.

Suddenly Mothril appeared more serene. What he had just discovered was, no doubt, less terrible than what he had feared at first.

"Well," said he, "I congratulate you on your page's address; the audience you desired is granted to you."

"And for what day?"

"For to-morrow," replied Mothril.

"God be praised!" said Musaron.

"But have a care," continued the Moor, addressing the knight, "lest your interview with the king have not the happy termination which you hope for."

"I hope for nothing," said Agénor; "I come to perform a mission—that is all."

"Do you wish a piece of advice?" said Mothril, assuming an almost insinuating tone of voice.

"Thanks," said Agénor. "From you I wish nothing."

"Why not?"

"Because I receive nothing from an enemy."

These words, the young man in his turn pronounced with such an expression of hatred that the Moor shuddered.

"Good;" said he; "Frenchmen, adieu!"

"Adieu, infidel!" said Agénor.

Mothril went out; he knew, on the whole, what he wished to know; the king had been informed, but by a channel which inspired little fear. It was not what he had dreaded at first.

Two hours after this interview, a strong body of guards came to take Agénor, at the threshold of the tower, and escorted him with great marks of respect to a house situated on the chief place of Soria.

Vast apartments, furnished with as much splendor as possible, were prepared to receive the ambassador.

"You are now, my lord, envoy of the King of France, in your own house," said the captain.

"I am not the envoy of the King of France," said Agénor, "nor do I deserve being treated as such. I am the envoy of the constable, Bertrand Duglesclin."

But the captain only answered the knight with a bow, and withdrew.

Musaron went round each room, inspecting the carpets, the furniture, the stuffs, and saying at each inspection:

"We are certainly better off here than in the tower."

While Musaron was going his rounds, the chief marshal of the palace entered and asked the knight whether he would not make some preparation to appear before the king.

"None is needful," said Agénor; "I have my sword, my helmet, and my cuirass; these are the soldier's ornaments, and I am only a soldier sent by his captain."

The marshal left, ordering the trumpets to give a flourish.

An instant afterwards, a superb horse, covered with magnificent housings, was brought to the door.

"I need no other horse than my own," said Agénor; "it has been taken from me, let it be returned to me; that is all I wish for."

Ten minutes afterwards Agénor's horse was restored to him.

An immense concourse of people lined the road, but a very short one, which lay between Agénor's house and the king's palace. The young man sought to discover among the women crowded on the balconies, the travelling companion whom he knew so well. It was a vain attempt, from which he soon desisted.

All the nobility faithful to Don Pedro, formed a body of cavalry drawn up in the court of honour of the palace. Their suits of armour covered with gold formed a dazzling spectacle.

Scarcely had Agénor alighted when he felt somewhat bewildered. Events had succeeded with so much rapidity that he had not yet had time to reflect on his mission, persuaded as he had been, that it would not be fulfilled.

His tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth: he had not a clear idea in his head. All his thoughts floated vaguely and undecidedly, conflicting like clouds in a foggy autumnal day.

His entry into the hall of audience was that of a blind man, whose sight is suddenly restored under a burning ray of the sun, illuming a cloud of gold, of purple, and of moving plumes.

Suddenly a resounding voice was heard, a voice which he could recognise, having heard previ-

ously one night in the garden of Bordeaux, one day in the tent of Caverley.

"Sir knight," said that voice, "you desired to speak to the king; you are now before the king."

These words fixed the knight's eyes on the point which they were to embrace. He recognised Don Pedro. On his right, was a woman seated, on his left was Mothril standing.

Mothril was as pale as death; he had just recognised in the knight the lover of Aissa.

This inspection had been rapid as thought.

"My lord," said Agénor, "I never believed for a single instant, that I was arrested by your lordship's orders."

Don Pedro bit his lips.

"Sir knight," he said, "you are a Frenchman, and perhaps, therefore, you are ignorant, that when one speaks to the King of Spain, one styles him sire and highness."*

In fact, I am in the wrong," said the knight, bowing, "you are king at Soria."

"Yes, king at Soria," resumed Don Pedro, "until he who has usurped that title has ceased to be king elsewhere."

"Sire," said Agénor, "it is happily not on those high questions which I have to discuss with you. I have come on the part of your brother, Don Henry of Transtamara, to propose to you a good and faithful peace of which your people have so much need, and at which your fraternal hearts will also rejoice."

"Sir knight," said Don Pedro, "if you have come to discuss this point with me, tell me then why you now come to propose what you refused a week ago?"

Agénor bowed.

"I am not, your highness," said he, "judge between two powerful princes; I have only to repeat what has been told me: That is all. I am a voice reaching from Burgos to Soria, from one brother's heart to another."

"Ah! you do not know why he offers me peace to day," said Don Pedro. "Well! I will tell you."

Profound silence pervaded the assembly in expectation of the king's words; Agénor availed himself of that moment, to cast his eyes again on the veiled woman and on the Moor. The veiled woman was always as mute and motionless as a statue. The Moor was pale and so changed that he appeared to have exhausted in a night, all the sufferings of a life-time.

"You offer me peace in my brother's name," said the king, "because my brother wishes me to refuse it, and knows that I will refuse it on such conditions as you are about to propose."

"Sire," said Agénor, "your highness is still ignorant what those conditions are."

"I know that you are about to offer me the half of Spain; I know that you are about to demand from me hostages, among the number of whom will be my minister Mothril and his family."

Mothril, from being pale, became livid; his glowing eye appeared striving to read in Don Pedro's heart to become assured whether he would persevere in his refusal.

Agénor trembled: he had not imparted these conditions to any one except the gipsy to whom he had said a few words on the subject.

*The word "Monseigneur" is, however, repeatedly put into Mothril's mouth when addressing Don Pedro. This remark seems, therefore, out of place. The word majesty only came into use long afterwards, in England first in Henry the Eighth's reign.—TRANSLATOR.

"Your highness," said he, "is, in truth, well informed "though how or by whom I know not."

At that moment, the woman seated next to the king, without any marked manner, and with a natural gesture, raised her gold embroidered veil and let it fall on her shoulders.

Agénor was almost ready to cry out with alarm; in that woman sitting at Don Pedro's right hand, he recognised his travelling companion.

The blood rushed to his face; he now understood whence the king had derived the information which had spared him the trouble of stating the conditions of peace.

"Sir knight," said the king, "learn from my mouth, and repeat to those who sent you, that whatever be the conditions proposed to me, there is one that I shall always reject, that of a partition of my kingdom, seeing that my kingdom is my own, and that I have resolved to be free to dispose of it according to my good pleasure; when I have conquered, I will offer conditions in my turn."

"Then your highness wills war?" asked Agénor.

"I do not will it, but must meet it," replied Don Pedro.

"That is your highness' immutable decision?"

"Yes."

Agénor slowly took off his steel gauntlet and flung it into the space which divided him from the king.

"In the name of Don Henry of Transtamara, King of Castile," he cried, "I bring war hither."

The king arose amid loud murmurs, and a formidable clashing of arms.

"You have faithfully performed your mission, sir knight," said he; "it remains that we should honorably perform our duty as a king. We offer you twenty-four hours' hospitality in our town, and if it suit you, our palace shall be your residence, and our table your own."

Agénor, without replying, made a low bow to the king, and, on raising his head, cast his eyes on the woman seated by the king's side.

She looked at him with a sweet smile. It even seemed to him that she pressed her finger to her lips, as if to say—

"Be patient and hopeful!"

CHAPTER XL.

THE RENDEZVOUS

Notwithstanding this species of tacit promise which Agénor, besides, could scarcely explain to himself, he left the royal audience in a state of anxiety easily to be conceived. All that appeared ascertained to him, without any doubt, was that the unknown gipsy, with whom he had travelled on such terms of familiarity, was no other than the celebrated Maria Padilla.

Don Pedro's resolution, which he had not even waited his words to burst forth, was not what made him most anxious: for, after all, Don Pedro had only learnt on the yesterday, what he ought to have known only on the morrow. But Agénor further remembered having confided to the gipsy his dearest and most cherished secret—his love for Aissa.

The jealousy of that terrible woman once awakened against poor Aissa, who could know where the frenzy, which had already sacrificed so many innocent heads, would stop?

All these gloomy thoughts awakened at once in Agénor's mind, prevented his remarking the furious looks of Mothril and the noble Moors, whom the proposition made in Henry of Trans-tamara's name, had wounded at once in their pride and their interests.

With his high-mettle and bravery, the knight would perhaps scarcely have maintained, in the face of their glances of defiance, all the calmness and imperturbability of an ambassador.

At the moment that he was perhaps about to remark the reply to them, another circumstance occurred to divert his attention. Scarcely was he out of the palace, and past the rank of guards which surrounded it, when a woman wrapped in a long veil, touched his arm with a mysterious sign, inviting him to follow her.

Agénor hesitated an instant; he knew with how many snares Don Pedro, and his vindictive mistress, surrounded their enemies; what fertility of resources they could display when a deed of vengeance was to be worked out; but at that moment the knight, though a good Christian, nevertheless, was under a belief in that oriental fatality which does not leave man his free arbitrament, and thus takes from him—is it not sometimes a happiness?—and thus takes from him the faculty of foreseeing and repelling evil.

The knight then stifled all fear; he said within himself that he had already struggled sufficiently long, that it was good to finish with the matter one way or another, and that if fate had fixed that hour for his last, it should be welcome.

He followed, therefore, the old woman, who went through the concourse of people—the same in all great towns,—and who, certain no doubt of escaping recognition when so closely wrapped up, went straight to the house which had been given to the knight as a residence.

Musaron was in attendance on the threshold of the house.

Once within, it was Agénor who led the old woman in the most remote apartment. The old woman followed in her turn, and Musaron, guessing something new would happen, brought up the rear.

The old woman once within, raised her veil and Agénor and his squire recognised the gipsy's nurse.

After what had just occurred at the palace, this apparition nowise surprised Agénor; but Musaron in his ignorance uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"My lord," said the old woman, "Donna Maria Padilla wishes to speak with you, and desires that, for that purpose, you would repair this evening to the palace. The king is to pass in review, the troops who have recently joined; during this time Donna Maria will be alone. Can she rely on you? Will you come and see her?"

"But," said Agénor; who could not assume those favorable sentiments for Donna Maria which he did not feel, "why does Donna Maria wish to see me?"

"Do you think, Sir knight, that it is a great misfortune to be chosen by a woman like Donna Maria, to come and speak to her in secret?" said the nurse, with the complaisant smile of an old southern female servant.

"No," said Agénor, "but I confess that I love meetings in the open air, where space is not wanting, and where a man may go with his horse and lance."

"And I with my crossbow," said Musaron.

The old woman smiled at these signs of apprehension.

"I see," said she, "that I must accomplish my mission to the end."

And she drew from a bag a little pouch containing a letter.

Musaron, who always on such occasions, performed the office of reader, took the paper and read:

"This, sir knight, is a safe conduct given by your travelling companion. Come then, and find me at the hour and place mentioned by my nurse, that we may speak of Aissa."

At these words Agénor trembled, and as the name of a mistress is a lover's religion, that of Aissa seemed a solemn safeguard to Agénor, and he immediately exclaimed that he was ready to follow the nurse wherever she chose to go.

"In that case," said she, "nothing can be more simple, and I will wait for your lordship this evening at the castle chapel. The chapel is open to the officers of the king; but at 8 o'clock at night the gates are closed. You will enter at half-past seven, and hide yourself behind the altar."

"Behind the altar," said Agénor, shaking his head with the prejudice of a man of the north, "I do not like the assignations given behind the altar."

"Oh, fear nothing," said the old woman naïvely; "in Spain, God is not offended with those little profanations, to which he is quite used. Besides, you will not long remain waiting; behind that altar is a door by which the prince and the persons of his household may go from his apartments to the chapel. I will open that door for you, and you will disappear without being seen, by that unknown road."

"Without being seen. Ahem! ahem!" said Musaron, speaking French, "that sounds terribly cut-throatish, Sir Agénor; what do you think?"

"Fear nothing," replied the knight, in the same language; "we have that woman's letter, and, although signed only with her baptismal name, it is a guarantee. If any misfortune befall me, you will return with this letter to the constable and to Don Henry of Transtamara; you will explain to them my love, my misfortunes, the cunning employed to draw me into the snare; and I know them both well enough to be sure that they will inflict on the traitors a vengeance which shall make Spain shudder."

"Very good," replied Musaron; "but in the meanwhile, you would not the less have been murdered."

"Yes; but if it be really to speak to Aissa that Donna Maria sends for me——"

"Sir, you are in love; that is, you are mad," replied Musaron; "and a madman is always in the right; above all when he raves. Excuse me, sir, but it is the truth. I give up; go there if you please."

And the honest Musaron sighed deeply as he ended his peroration.

"But, in fact," he suddenly resumed, "why should not I go with you?"

"Because a reply must be delivered to the king of Castile, Don Henry of Transtamara," the good knight replied; "and that if I die, you alone could relate the result of my mission."

And Agénor briefly and clearly related to the squire Don Pedro's reply.

"But, at least," said Musaron, who would not give in, "I may watch round the palace."



"To what purpose?"

"To defend you, body of St. James!" exclaimed the squire; "to defend you with my cross-bow, which will knock down half a dozen of those yellow faces, while you knock down another half dozen with your sword. It will always be a dozen infidels the less, which can't hurt our salvation."

"My dear Musaron," said Agénor, "on the contrary, be so good as not to show yourself. If they kill me, the walls of the Alcazar will alone witness the deed; but listen," he continued, with the trustfulness of an upright heart, "I do not think I have insulted that Donna Maria Padilla; she cannot, therefore, have any ill will against me; perhaps I have even done her a service."

"Yes; but the Moor; but the Senor Mothril, you have insulted him enough, have you not, both here and elsewhere? Now, if I am not deceived, he is governor of the palace, and you

may have an idea of his kind disposition in your favour by his having you arrested at the gates of the town, and wishing to throw you into a dungeon. It is not the favourite woman that is to be feared, I allow, but the favourite minister."

Agénor, somewhat superstitious, and very ready to mix religion with those capitulations of conscience so frequent with lovers; he turned towards the old woman, saying,

"If she smiles, I will go."

The old woman was smiling.

"Return to Donna Maria," said the knight to the nurse; "it is a thing agreed on: this evening at seven o'clock, I will be at the chapel."

"'Tis well, and I will be in attendance with the key of the little door," replied the woman.

"Adieu, Sir Agénor; adieu! gracious squire."

Musaron nodded his head, the old woman disappeared.

"Now," said Agénor, turning towards Musaron,

"no letters for the constable; they might stop you, and take them from you. You will tell him that war is resolved on—that hostilities must be begun; you have our money, you will make use of it to get on as quickly as possible."

"But you, my lord? for after all one must suppose that you will not be killed."

"I am in need of nothing. If I am betrayed I shall only have sacrificed a life of fatigue and deception, of which I am weary. If, on the contrary, Donna Maria protects me, she will provide me with horses and guides. Leave, Musaron; leave this very instant; it is on me, not on you, that eyes are fixed; it is known that I remain and that is enough. Leave: your horse is good and your courage high. As to myself I shall pass the rest of the day in prayer. Go!"

This project, however adventurous, was well chosen for the state of circumstances. Therefore Musaron ceased to discuss it, not from courtesy to his master, but from conviction.

Musaron left a quarter of an hour after the resolution had been arrived at, and left the town without difficulty. Agénor applied himself to prayer as he had said, and at half-past seven went to the chapel.

The old woman was waiting for him; she made him a sign to hasten on, and opened the little door, dragging the knight in after her.

After threading a long range of corridors and galleries, Agénor entered a low saloon dimly lighted, and round which was a terrace covered with flowers. A woman was seated under a species of canopy, accompanied by a slave, whom, on the knight's approach, she dismissed.

The old woman also discreetly withdrew as soon as she had introduced the knight.

"Thanks for your exactness," said Donna Maria to Mauléon. "I knew well that you were generous and brave. I wished to thank you after having apparently committed an act of perfidy."

Agénor made no reply; it was to speak of Aïssa that he had been sent for, and that he had come.

"Come near," said Donna Maria; "I am so much attached to the king, Don Pedro, that I was obliged to consult his interests, even though I wounded yours; but my love is my excuse, and you who love, ought to understand me."

Maria was coming nearer to the object of the interview. Agénor, however, only bowed and remained silent.

"Now," said Maria, "that my affairs are dismissed, let us, sir knight, speak of your own."

"Of what affairs?" asked Agénor.

"Of those which most deeply interest you."

Agénor, at the sight of that open smile, of that graceful action, that cordial eloquence, felt himself disarmed.

"Seat yourself there," said the enchantress, pointing out a place near her.

The knight did as he was bid.

"You have believed me to be your enemy," said the young woman, "yet it is quite otherwise, and the proof is, that I am ready to do you a service, at least equal to those which you have performed for me."

Agénor looked at her with astonishment; Maria Padilla resumed:—

"Certainly; were you not my good defender, while we were on the road, and a good indirect counsellor?"

"Very indirect," said Agénor, "for I was completely ignorant to whom I was speaking."

"I did not the less succeed in serving the king, thanks to the information which you gave me,"

added Donna Maria, with a smile; "cease then to deny that you have been useful to me."

"Well! I will confess it, madam—but as to yourself."

"You do not think me capable of serving you. Oh! sir knight, you suspect my gratitude!"

"Perhaps you would wish to do so, madam. I do not say otherwise."

"I have both the wish and the possibility. Admit, for instance, that you were detained at Soria."

Agénor trembled.

"I can, for my part," continued Maria, "forward your escape from the town."

"Ah! madam," said Agénor, "in acting thus, you would serve the interests of the king, Don Pedro, as well as my own; for you would prevent the king's being charged with treason and baseness."

"I should admit that," replied the young woman, "were you a mere ambassador, unknown to all, and had you come to accomplish a purely political mission, such as could excite hatred and distrust in the king alone; but examine well, have you not at Soria another enemy, a wholly personal enemy?"

Agénor was visibly troubled.

"Can you not understand, if it were so," pursued Donna Maria, "that such an enemy, if you had one, without consulting the king, and caring only for his private resentment, might lay a snare to avenge himself upon you, without the king's having any part in that vengeance? which might be easily proved to your countrymen, in case any explanation were come to. For, remember well, sir knight, you are here at least as much for the purpose of watching over your own interests as over those of Don Henry de Trans-tamara."

Agénor allowed a sigh to escape him.

"Ah! I think you have understood me," said Maria. "Well, could I ward from you the danger which may menace you in this meeting?"

"You would save my life, madam, and for most men the preservation of their lives is a great concern; but as to myself, I know not whether I should be very grateful for your generosity."

"Why not?"

"Because I do not value life."

"You do not value life?"

"No," said Agénor, shaking his head.

"Because you have some deep vexation; is it not so?"

"Yes, madam."

"And did I know that vexation?"

"You?"

"Could I show you its cause?"

"You! you could tell me, you could show me?"

Maria Padilla went towards the silk hanging which closed the terrace.

"See," said she, withdrawing the tapestry.

A lower terrace was now visible, separated from the first by a thicket of orange trees, pomegranate trees, and rose laurels. On this terrace, surrounded by flowers and bathed in the golden dust of the setting sun, a woman was swinging in a purple coloured hammock.

"Well," said Donna Maria.

"Aïssa," exclaimed Mauléon, clasping his hands with delight.

"The daughter of Mothril, I believe," said Donna Maria.

"Oh! madam," exclaimed Mauléon, devouring with his eyes the space which divided him from

Aïssa. "Yes, there, there, you are right, is the happiness of my life!"

"Truly, so near," said Donna Maria, with a smile, "and so far off!"

"Are you mocking me, senora?" asked Agénor, with anxiety.

"God forbid, sir knight. I only say that Donna Aïssa is at this moment the image of happiness; it often seems that one has only to extend one's hand to touch it, when one is really separated from it by some obstacle which, though invisible, is yet beyond our power to surmount."

"Alas! I know it, she is watched, guarded."

"Shut in, sir knight, shut in by iron bars with strong locks."

"Could I but attract her attention!" exclaimed Agénor, "see her, and be seen by her."

"That would then make you very happy?"

"Supremely so."

"Well, I will gratify you. Donna Aïssa has not seen you, and were she to see you, her grief would only be increased, for it is a sad consolation for lovers to stretch out their arms to each other, and confide kisses to the air. Do better, sir knight."

"Oh! what must I do? Say on, say on, madam; order, or rather advise me."

"Do you see that door," said Donna Maria, pointing to an entrance on the terrace itself.

"Here is the key, the largest of the three attached to this ring; you have only to descend one flight of stairs. A long passage similar to that you followed in coming here, gives on the garden of the neighbouring house, the trees of which appear at the level of Donna Aïssa's terrace. Ah! you begin to understand me, I think?"

"Yes, yes," said Mauléon, devouring Donna Maria's words as fast as they dropped from her mouth.

"That garden," she continued, "is closed with a grating of which the key is here, near the first. Once there, you can come still nearer to Donna Aïssa, for you can reach the foot of the terrace, where she is now swinging; only the wall of that terrace is perpendicular, and it is impossible to scale it; at least, however, once there, you might call your mistress and speak to her."

"Thanks! thanks!" exclaimed Mauléon.

"You are already more satisfied, so much the better," said Donna Maria, stopping him; "yet there is danger in thus conversing at a distance: one may be heard. I say that to you, although Mothril is absent; he accompanies the king to the review of the troops who have come from Africa, and will only return at half-past nine at earliest, or at ten, and it is now only eight."

"One hour and a half! Oh, madam, give me that key, give it me quickly, I beg."

"Oh! there is no time lost. Allow that last ray of the sun which now tinges the west with red, to grow dim; it is but a minute or two to wait. Then do you wish me to tell you —?" she added, with a smile.

"Tell me."

"I know not how to detach this second key from the third, for I had great trouble in getting hold of this third which had been given by Mothril to Don Pedro himself"

"To Don Pedro?" said Agénor, with a shudder.

"Yes," resumed Maria. "You are to understand that this third key opens the gate which leads to the terrace itself, that it opens that impracticable wall at its base, and leads to a very convenient staircase opening on the terrace, where,

at this very moment, Aïssa is, no doubt, dreaming of you."

Agénor uttered a cry of frantic joy.

"So that," continued Donna Maria, "this gate once shut, you will be at liberty to converse an hour and a half with Mothril's daughter, and that without fear of being observed. For if any one comes, and they can only come by the house, you will have a sure and open retreat by this side."

Agénor fell on his knees and devoured the hand of his protectress.

"Madam," said he, "ask for my life, on the day it may be useful to you, and I will give it you."

"Thanks, but preserve it for your mistress, Sir Agénor. The sun has set, in some instants the darkness of night will have fallen; you have but an hour. Go, and do not compromise me with Mothril."

Agénor darted down the little staircase of the terrace and disappeared.

"Sir knight," called Donna Maria, as he fled, "in an hour your horse will be ready at the chapel door; but let Mothril suspect nothing, or we are both lost."

"In an hour, I swear it you!" replied the knight's already distant voice.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE INTERVIEW.

It was, in fact, Aïssa, who, pensive and alone, was on the terrace below the palace which adjoined her own and her father's apartment, and, who languid and dreamy, like a true child of the East, was inhaling the evening breeze, and following with her eyes the last rays of the sun.

When the sun had set, her eyes wandered over the magnificent gardens of the palace, seeking over the walls and trees what she had sought beyond the horizon, while the horizon had been visible; that idea, that vivid remembrance, which holds no count of space or time, and which is called love — that is, eternal hope.

She was dreaming of the gardens of France, more green and shady, if not more perfumed, than those where she now was, of those rich gardens of Bordeaux, the protecting shade of which had sheltered the sweetest scene in her life, and as the human mind seeks some sad or joyful analogy to all things on which it dwells, she thought at the same time of the gardens of Seville, where, for the first time, she had seen Agénor near her, had spoken to him, had touched his hand, which she now longed to clasp again.

There are abysses in the thoughts of lovers. As in the brains of the insane, extremes meet in them with the incoherent rapidity of dreams, and the smile of the young girl who loves, often passes like that of *Ophelia*, into bitter tears and heart-rending sobs.

Aïssa, quite overcome by her recollections, smiled, sighed, and shed tears.

She was weeping, and, perhaps, was about to sob, when a hurried step resounded on the stone staircase.

She thought that Mothril, already returned, was hastening, as he sometimes did, to surprise her in the midst of her softest dreams. as if in that man of magical clear-sightedness, intelligence, like an infernal torch, remained constantly alive, lighting all things around him, and leaving nothing dark but his unchangeable, profound and all-powerful thoughts.

And yet the step did not seem to her to be Mothrill's, and its sound came from a quarter opposite to that by which Mothrill came.

Then, with a shudder, she thought of the king—the king—whom, since Donna Maria's arrival, she had quite ceased to fear; and had, consequently, forgotten. That staircase by which the noise came was that which Mothrill had reserved as a secret entry for the sovereign.

She hastened, therefore, not to dry her tears, which would have been vulgar dissembling, which would have been below the pride of her thoughts, but to banish a remembrance which its softness made unfit for the presence of the enemy who was about to confront her; if it were Mothrill, she had her will; if it were Don Pedro, she had her dagger.

Then she turned her back to the door as if nothing either propitious or threatening could reach her in Agénor's absence, preparing her ears to hear harsh words in harmony with the sinister step which had already made her shudder.

Suddenly she felt two iron-clad arms wound around her neck; she uttered a cry of anger and disgust, but her mouth was closed by two eager lips. Then by the devouring sensation which passed into her veins, even more than by the look which she cast upon him, she recognised Agénor kneeling on the marble at her feet.

Scarcely could she stifle the second cry of joy which exhaled from her lips and unburdened her heart. She rose up, still entwined around her lover, and, strong as the young panther dragging its prey into the bushes of Atlas, she led, or rather carried, Agénor into the staircase, which hid, in its mysterious shade, the joy of the two lovers.

Aïssa's room, sheltered by long blinds, opened at the foot of this staircase; therefore, she took refuge in her lover's arms; and as all light from without was absorbed by the thick hangings; as no noise could penetrate through the tapestried walls, naught was heard during some instants but devouring kisses and sighs of flame, lost in Aïssa's long, black, and perfumed tresses, which had become unloosed in their embraces, and wrapped them both like a veil.

A stranger to our European manners, and not knowing the art of doubling desire by resistance, Aïssa had surrendered herself to her lover, as the first of womankind might have done, under the dominion of instinct, and with all the abandonment and fervour of a delight which is felt to be the chief of all.

"You! you!" she murmured, with intoxication; "you in the king, Don Pedro's palace! you restored to my wild passion! Oh, days are too long in absence, and God has two measures for time—the minutes in which I see you—fleeting as shadows—the days on which I do not see you—and which pass like centuries."

Then their voices were again lost in a sweet and long kiss.

"Oh! you are now mine!" at last exclaimed Agénor; "what matters Mothrill's hate? What matters the king's love? Now I am ready to die."

"Die!" said Aïssa, with humid eyes and trembling lips; "die! Oh! no, you shall not die, my well beloved. I saved you at Bordeaux, and will save you here again. As to the king's love, look how little my heart is, and how small a part of my breast it raises up. Do you think that in that heart filled only with you, beating only for you,

there can be room even for the shadow of another love?"

"Oh! God forbid that I should for an instant suppose that my Aïssa would forget me. But where persuasion fails, violence is sometimes all-powerful. Have you not heard related the adventure of Leonora de Ximénès, to whom the king's brutality left no other refuge than a convent?"

"Leonora de Ximénès was not Aïssa, my lord. It will not be with one, I swear to you, as it was with the other."

"You will defend yourself, I well know, but in defending yourself you will perhaps perish!"

"Well, would you not love me better dead than if belonging to another?"

"Oh! yes, yes!" cried the young man, pressing her to his heart. "Oh! yes, die, die, if it be needful, but belong only to me."

And he again wrapped her in his arms with a movement of love which almost resembled terror.

Night, which already darkened the walls without, had within the apartment concealed the form of every object; in such an obscurity, full of loving words and burning breath, how was it possible to avoid burning with that fire which consumes without giving light, like those terrible flames which rage even under water.

During a long while, the silence of death, or that of love, pervaded the chamber where two voices had just resounded and two hearts had mingled their beatings.

Agénor was the first to tear himself from that ineffable happiness. He girt himself with his sword, of which the iron scabbard clanked on the marble.

"What are you doing!" exclaimed the young girl, seizing the knight's arm.

"You have said," replied Agénor, "that time has two measures; minutes for happiness, and ages for despair. I must depart!"

"You will depart; but you will take me with you, will you not? We will leave together?"

The young man withdrew with a sigh from his mistress's arms.

"Impossible," said he.

"Why impossible?"

"Yes; I came here in the sacred character of an ambassador, it is that which protects me; I cannot break it."

"But I!" exclaimed Aïssa, "I will not leave you."

"Aïssa," said the young man, "I come in the name of the good constable; I come in the name of Henry de Transtamara. One has confided me the interests of French honour; the others those of the Castilian throne; what would they say, if they saw that instead of fulfilling that mission, I had only cared for the interests of my love?"

"Who will tell them? Who prevents you from concealing me from all eyes?"

"It is necessary that I should return to Burgos. There are three days' journey from Soria to Burgos."

"I am strong and accustomed to rapid marches."

"No doubt, for the march of the Arab horsemen is rapid, more rapid than ours could be. In an hour Mothrill would perceive your evasion; in an hour he would be in pursuit; Aïssa, I cannot re-enter Burgos as a fugitive."

"Oh! my God! must we again part," said Aïssa.

"This time, at least; our separation shall be short, I swear. Let me discharge my mission;

let me rejoin Don Henry's camp, let me lay down the employment which he has conferred on me, and become once more Agénor, the French knight, who loves you, and then, Aïssa, I swear, under one disguise or another, even that of an Infidel, I will return to you, and *then* I will carry you off by force, if you will not come."

"No, no," said Aïssa, "my life has only began to-day; until to-day, I did not live, for I did not belong to you; from to-day, I cannot live without you; I cannot, as I did before, sigh and weep while waiting for you; no, I should rage, I should tear myself in my grief, for, from to-day, I am your wife! Oh! may all those perish who prevent the wife's following her husband!"

"What, even our protectress, Aïssa? even that generous woman who led me to you; even poor Maria Padilla, on whom Mothril would wreak his vengeance? And you know how Mothril avenges himself."

"Oh! my soul is leaving me," murmured the young girl, growing pale; for she felt that a superior strength, that of reason, was separating her from her lover. "But let me rejoin you; I have two mules so rapid that they outvie in speed the most rapid horses. You will point out some spot to me where I may wait for, or rejoin you; and be assured that I will rejoin you."

"Aïssa, we are returning to the same end, by another road. It is impossible—impossible!"

The young girl fell on her knees. The proud Moresca was at Agénor's feet in prayer and supplication.

At that moment the mournful and plaintive sound of a guzla was heard above their heads, imitating the anxious call of an expectant friend; both trembled.

"Whence comes that noise?" said Aïssa.

"I can guess," said Agénor; "come, come."

Both remounted the terrace.

Agénor's eyes were instantly directed to Maria's terrace.

The night was dark, yet, by the dim light of the stars, the lovers might distinguish a white dress leaning on the parapet, and turned in their direction.

Perhaps they might still have remained doubting whether it were a phantom or a woman, but, at the same instant, the vibrations of a sonorous chord were heard in the same direction as before.

"She calls me," murmured Agénor—"she calls me; do you not hear?"

"Come, come!" cried, as if coming from heaven, the lowered voice of Donna Maria.

"Do you hear her, Aïssa?—do you hear her?" said Agénor.

"Oh! I neither see, nor hear anything," stammered the young girl.

At the same time was heard a flourish of trumpets, such as usually accompanied the king on his return to the palace.

"Great God!" exclaimed Aïssa, suddenly transformed into a weak and anxious woman; "they come; fly, my Agénor, fly!"

"One more adieu!" said Agénor.

"The last, perhaps," murmured the young girl, pressing her lips to her lover's.

And she pushed the young man upon the staircase.

His step had not ceased to sound, when that of Mothril was heard; and the door leading to Maria Padilla's room had scarcely closed, when that of Aïssa's was opened.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE PREPARATIONS FOR BATTLE.

THREE days after the events we have just related, Agénor, having rejoined Musaron by the same road he had taken in coming, was giving an account of his mission to Henry of Transtamara.

None were blind to the danger which Agénor had run in discharging his trust as an ambassador. Therefore, the constable thanked him, praised him, and instructed to take his place among the bravest Bretons, under the banner of Sylvester de Budes.

On all sides preparations were made for war. The Prince of Wales had obtained a passage through the territory of the King of Navarre, and had rejoined Don Pedro, bringing with him a good army to act with his good African troops.

The English adventurers again, having decidedly adhered to Don Pedro, were preparing to strike heavy blows against the Bretons* and the Gascons, their inveterate enemies.

It need not be said that the boldest plans and those most likely to prove lucrative, were fermenting in the head of our friend, Messire Hugh de Caverley.

Henry de Transtamara was not in arrear with his warlike preparations. He had been joined by his two brothers, Don Tellez and Don Sancho, had entrusted them with commands, and was marching, by easy journeys, to meet his other brother, Don Pedro.

Throughout Spain, that feverish ardour was felt which passes, so to speak, through the air, and which precedes all great events. Musaron, always full of forethought and philosophy, exhorted his master to eat the best game and drink the choicest wines, so as to be stronger for the day of battle and acquire as much honour as possible.

Lastly, Agénor, once more free, and rendered more amorous than ever by a momentary possession, was combining all possible and impossible means to get near Aïssa, and to carry her off, so as to avoid being obliged to wait for the hazardous event of a battle, where one may come in strength and pride, but leave a fugitive, or with a mortal wound.

For the purpose in question, he had, with Bertrand's bounty, bought two Arab horses, which Musaron exercised every day in making long courses and in supporting hunger and thirst.

At last, news was brought that the Prince of Wales had passed the defiles and entered the plain. He marched with the army he had brought from Guienne, to near the town of Vittoria, at a little distance from Navarrete.

He had thirty thousand horsemen and forty thousand infantry. It was a force about equal to that commanded by Don Pedro.

Henry de Transtamara had, on his side, about forty thousand horsemen, and sixty thousand infantry. Bertrand, who had brought up the rear-guard with his Bretons, allowed the Spaniards to

* The Bretons and Gascons collectively were so far then from being the enemies of the English, that the latter were their subjects, and the former their allies. The then Duke of Brittany had been seated on his throne by Edward the Third's efforts, and Gascony had long been an appanage of the English crown. Great part of the forces under the Black Prince's command were from these provinces; and among their leaders we find the Gascon, Captal de Buch, and the Bretons, Olivier de Clisson, and the Maréchal de Retz, mentioned by M. Dumas himself, following history in those particulars, among the leaders.—TRANSLATOR.

rodomontade and boast on either side the victory, which neither had yet gained.

But he had his spies, who daily reported to him all that Don Pedro's and even Don Henry's army was doing, and he knew all Caverley's projects at the very moment that the fertile imagination of the adventurer gave them birth.

He was consequently aware that the worthy captain, having his appetite sharpened by the royal captures he had previously made, had offered the Prince of Wales to end the war by a single blow.

His plan was exceedingly simple; it was that of the bird of prey which hovers aloft in the air at an invisible height, then swoops suddenly down on its prey, and bears it off in its talons, when it least expects it.

Messire Hugh de Caverley, leagued with John Chandos, the Duke of Lancaster, and a part of the English advanced guard, was to burst suddenly on Don Henry's quarters, carry him and his court off, and thus make at a blow, fifty ransoms of which one would be sufficient for the fortune of six adventurers.

The Prince of Wales had accepted; he had nothing to lose, and everything to gain by the offer proposed to him.

Unfortunately for the project, Messire Bertrand Duguesclin had, as we have said, spies who told him all that was going on in the enemy's camp.

More unfortunately still, he had against the English, in general, the old rancour of a Breton, and against Messire Caverley, in particular, a hatred which was quite new.

He therefore instructed his spies not to sleep for an instant, or if they slept, to sleep only with one eye.

He was consequently informed of Messire Hugh de Caverley's slightest movements.

An hour before the worthy captain left the Prince of Wales's camp, the constable assembled six thousand Breton and Spanish horsemen, and sent Agénor and the Bègue de Vilaines, by a road opposite his own, to take post in a wood, traversed by a defilé.

Each of the troops was to occupy a parallel portion of the wood, and then when the English had passed, close the defilé behind them.

On his side Henry de Transtamara being forewarned, kept all his troops under arms.

Caverley was therefore to strike against an iron wall, and when he strove to beat in retreat, to find himself cut off by another iron wall.

At nightfall, men and horses were already in ambuscade. Each horseman, prostrate on his belly, held in hand his horse's bridle.

About ten o'clock, Caverley and all his troop entered the defilé. Such was the security with which the English marched, that they did not even explore the wood, which the night, besides, made it difficult, if not impossible to do.

Behind the English, the Bretons and Spaniards joined again, like the links of a re-united chain.

About midnight, a great noise was heard; it was Caverley charging on the king, Don Henry's quarters, and the latter receiving him with the shout of Don Henry and Castile!

Then Bertrand having Agénor at his right, and the Bègue de Vilaines at his left, put his troop to the gallop, with the shout of Notre-Dame Guesclin!

At the same time great fires were lighted on the flanks, and illumined the scene, showing

Caverley his five or six thousand adventurers enclosed between two armies.

Caverley was not the man to seek a useless death, however glorious. In the place of Edward III at Cressy, he would have fled; in the place of the Prince of Wales, at Poitiers, he would have laid down his arms.

But as one only surrenders at the last extremity, above all, when, by a surrender, one runs the risk of being hung, he put his horse to the gallop and disappeared by a lateral opening, like the traitor in a melodrama, by an ill-shut side entrance.

All his baggage, a considerable sum in gold, a casket of precious stones and jewels, the fruit of three years' rapine, during which the worthy captain had displayed more genius in escaping the rope than Hannibal, Cæsar, and Alexander had ever exhibited, fell into the Bastard of Mauléon's hands.*

Musaron reckoned up the spoil, while the dead were being stripped and the prisoners chained; he then discovered that he was in the service of one of the richest knights in Christendom. This change, and it was immense, had taken place in less than an hour.

The adventurers had been cut to pieces; two or three hundred at most had with difficulty succeeded in escaping.

This success wrought so much audacity in the Spaniards, that Don Tellez, the younger brother of Don Henry of Transtamara, urging his horse forward, wished, without further preparation, to march straight on the enemy.

"A moment, sir count," said Bertrand: "you will not, I presume, go alone against the enemy and risk being ingloriously taken prisoner."

"But all the army will go with me, I suppose," replied Don Tellez.

"Not so, my lord, not so," replied Bertrand.

"Let the Bretons remain if they will," said Don Tellez; "but I will march with the Spaniards."

"To what purpose?"

"To beat the English."

"Excuse me," said Bertrand, "the English have been beaten by the Bretons, but would not be so by the Spaniards."

"Why so?" impetuously exclaimed Don Tellez, going up to the constable.

"Because," said Bertrand, without discomposure, "the Bretons are better soldiers than the English; but the English are better soldiers than the Spaniards."

The young prince felt his forehead crimsoned by anger.

"It is a strange thing," said he, "that a Frenchman should be the master here in Spain; but we shall know forthwith whether Don Tellez has to obey instead of commanding. On, and follow me!"

"My eighteen thousand Bretons shall only move when I order them to move," said Bertrand. "As to your Spaniards, I am only their master so long as your master and mine, Don Henry of Transtamara, orders them to obey me."

"How prudent these Frenchmen are!" exclaimed the incensed Don Tellez. What *sang froid* they

* It has always seemed to me a poor and sorry sort of jesting which sports with the memory of great men, and brings down their noble deeds and high conceptions by mean and vulgar comparisons. French literature is extremely free from this debased sort of merriment, which, on the other hand, is a plague-spot on all English wit of the day, real or attempted. But we have here a very foolish specimen of this kind, quite unworthy of M. Dumas's abilities.—TRANSLATOR.

exhibit, not only in the face of danger, but even in that of insult! I congratulate you on the quality, sir constable."

"Yes, my lord," replied Bertrand; "my blood is cold when it is held in check, but is warm when it flows."

And the constable, ready to burst forth, closed his large fist against his coat of mail.

"It is cold, I tell you," the young man continued, "and that because you are old. Now when one gets old, one begins to be afraid."

"Afraid!" cried Agénor, urging on his horse to where Don Tellez stood; "whoever says that the constable is afraid, shall not say it a second time."

"Silence, my friend!" said the constable; "let fools talk according to their folly; and patience, patience!"

"Respect the blood royal!" exclaimed Don Tellez "respect it, do you hear?"

"Respect yourself, if you wish to be respected," suddenly said a voice which made the young prince tremble, for it was that of his elder brother, who had been acquainted with this untoward altercation; "and, above all, do not insult our ally and our hero."

"Thanks, sire," said Bertrand; "your tongue is generous in sparing me a task which is always disagreeable—that of chastising insolence. But I do not speak with reference to you, Don Tellez; you already understand how much you have been in the wrong."

"In the wrong! I! what, because I have said that we should go forth and give battle? Is it not true, sire, that we are about to march on the enemy?" said Don Tellez.

"To march on the enemy—at this moment!" exclaimed Duguesclin; "impossible!"

"No, my dear constable," said Don Henry, "it is so little impossible, that by daybreak we shall be engaged."

"Sire, we shall be beaten."

"Why so?"

"Because our position is a bad one."

"There are no bad positions; there are only brave men and cowards," exclaimed Don Tellez.

"Sir constable," said the king, "my nobles call for battle, and I cannot refuse what they demand. They have seen the Prince of Wales descend, and would have the appearance of giving way."

"Besides," said Don Tellez, "the constable will be at liberty to look on and rest while we are fighting."

"Sir," replied Duguesclin, "I will do all that the Spaniards do, and more I hope; for mark this well: you will attack in two hours' time, will you not?"

"Yes."

"Well! in four hours you will be flying through the plain, before the Prince of Wales, while I and my Bretons will be here where I am, without a man having receded the length of his soul, or a horseman that of his horse's shoe. Remain, and you will see."

"Come, sir constable," said Henry, "be more moderate."

"I tell you the truth, sire. You mean, you say, to give battle?"

"Yes, constable, I mean to do so because I ought to do so."

"So be it!"

Then turning to his Bretons,

"My children, we are to give battle. Get ready."

"All these brave fellows and I myself, sire,"

he continued, "will be this evening either dead or in the enemy's hands; but your will must be followed in all things; only remember that I shall lose only my life or my liberty, while you will lose a throne."

The king lowered his head, and turning towards his friends:

"The good constable is severe to us this morning," he said, "but make your preparations, nevertheless, my lords."

"It is true, then, that we shall be killed to-day?" said Musaron, loud enough to be heard by the constable.

The latter turned round.

"Oh! faith, yes, worthy squire," said he, smiling, "that's the naked truth."

"'Tis vexatious," said Musaron, striking his breeches-pocket, filled with gold, "that we should be killed just at the moment when we were about to be rich and to enjoy life."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BATTLE.

AN hour after this mournful reflection of the worthy squire, as Bertrand termed Musaron, the sun rose over the plains of Navarrete, as pure, as calm, and as tranquil as if he were not soon to enlighten one of the celebrated battles which stain the world's annals with blood.

When the sun rose, the plain was occupied by Don Henry's army, disposed in three bodies. Don Tellez, with his brother, Don Sancho, held the left, at the head of twenty-five thousand men.

Duguesclin, with six thousand men-at-arms; that is, about eighteen thousand horsemen, led the advanced guard. Lastly, Don Henry himself, about on the same level as his two brothers held the right with twenty-one thousand horsemen, and thirty thousand foot soldiers.

The army was disposed like the three grades of a flight of steps.

There was a reserve of Arragonese horsemen, well mounted, and commanded by the Counts of Aignes and of Roquebertin.

It was the 3d April, 1368, and the day before had been overpowering with heat and dust.

King Henry, mounted on a fine mule from Arragon, rode through the intervals of his squadrons, encouraging some, praising others, and representing to all the danger they would run, if they fell alive into the hands of the cruel Don Pedro.

As to the constable, who remained cool and resolute at his post, the king had embraced him, saying—"Your arm is about to fix the crown securely on my head. Why is it not the crown of the universe? I would offer it you, as it is the only one worthy of you."

Kings always find such expressions in the moment of danger. It is true that when the danger passes, it bears them away with it, as dust is borne away with the gust of wind which raised it.

Then Henry knelt on the bare ground, prayed to God, and was imitated by all his people.

At that moment the rays of the rising sun broke forth behind the mountain of Navarrete, and the soldiers, as they looked at it, perceived the first English lances bristling the slope, whence they began slowly to descend, forming at different

stages on the *plateaux** on the flanks of the mountain.

Agénor recognised in the banners of the first rank, that of Caverley, more stiff and proud than even at the moment of the nocturnal attack. Lancaster and Chandos, who, like our captain, had escaped from the defeat of the night, commanded with him, so much the more resolved that they had a terrible revenge to take.

All three went to take up their position opposite to that of Duguesclin.

The Prince of Wales and Don Pedro took post opposite to Don Sancho and Don Tellez.

The Captal de Buch, Jean Grailly, took post opposite Don Henry of Transtamara.

The Black Prince, as the only exhortation to his troops, touched by the sight of so many thousands of men prepared for mutual butchery, shed tears, and begged from God, not victory, but that right which is the device of the crown of England.

Then the trumpets sounded.

Immediately the plain was felt trembling under the shock of horses' feet, and a noise resembling that of two meeting thunder-clouds resounded through the air.

Yet the two advanced guards, composed of resolute, but experienced men, came forward only at a walk.

After the arrows' flight, by which the air was first darkened, the knights rushed forward against each other, and fought hand to hand, and in silence; it was a terrible and exciting spectacle for that part of the army which was not yet engaged.

The Black Prince allowed himself to be carried away like a private man-at-arms.

He urged all his *corps d'armée* at a gallop against Don Tellez.

It was the first pitched battle in which that young man had been engaged, and he saw coming against him those men who, with the Bretons, passed for being the first soldiers of the world.

He became afraid, and fell back.

His horsemen seeing him draw back, turned their horses' heads, and in an instant the whole left wing had taken flight under the influence of one of those panics, in the impulse and shame of which even the bravest sometimes share.

As Don Tellez passed before the Bretons, who, though they had formed the advanced guard, were now in the rear, in consequence of the movement which he had made in advance, he hastened his course, while he averted his head.

As to Don Sancho, he met the contemptuous glance of the constable; and, stooping short under that all-powerful look, he turned against the enemy, and got himself taken prisoner.

Don Pedro, who was with the Prince of Wales, in pursuit of the fugitives, eager to profit by this first success, seeing that the left wing was in rout, turned immediately against his brother Henry, who was bravely contending against the Captal de Buch.

But attacked in flank by seven thousand fresh lances, flushed with success, he wavered.

In the midst of the noise of clashing iron, of neighing horses, and of combatants shouting with

rage, was heard the voice of Don Pedro rising above all this uproar, and crying out—

"No quarter to the rebels!—no quarter!"

He fought with a gilded axe, of which all the gilding, from the edge to the handle, had already disappeared under blood.

During this time, the reserve having been broken through to its last ranks, by Olivier de Clisson, and the Sire de Retz, who had turned the battle, was overthrown and in flight. There were only Duguesclin and his Bretons remaining, who, as they had promised, had not drawn back a step, and formed in an unattackable mass, seemed an iron rock, round which the conquering battalions came to roll, like long and greedy serpents.

Duguesclin cast a rapid glance over the plain, and saw that the battle was lost. He saw thirty thousand soldiers flying in all directions; he saw the enemy everywhere, where, but an hour before, had been allies and friends. He understood that nothing remained but to die, doing as much mischief as possible to the enemy.

He cast his eyes to the left, and perceived an old wall, the rampart of a destroyed town. Two English companies separated him from this support, which once gained only admitted an attack in front. In a loud and sonorous voice he gave his orders; the two English companies were crushed, and the Bretons obtained the support of the wall.

Then Bertrand reformed his line, and breathed for an instant.

The Bègue de Vilaines and the Maréchal d'Audeneham took breath with him.

Agénor, whose horse had been killed in the affair, was waiting behind one of the turns of the wall the led horse which Musaron was bringing for him.

The constable availed himself of this momentary respite to raise the visor of his helmet, wipe his face from sweat and dust, and look around him, quietly counting the number of men that remained.

"The king," he asked, "where is the king? is he dead, or has he fled?"

"No, messire," said Agénor, "he is neither slain nor flying; there he is, coming towards us."

Don Henry, covered with the blood of his enemies mixed with his own, the crown on his helmet broken by the blow of an axe, rejoined the constable, fighting like a brave knight.

In fact, harassed and out of breath, retiring without flight, on the bended haunches of his charger, which had not ceased a moment to look towards the enemy,* the brave king was, by small degrees, making his way to the Bretons, drawing upon those faithful allies the cloud of English, who were greedy as ravens for so rich a prey.

Bertrand gave orders to a hundred men to go and support Don Henry, and to free him from the enemy's grasp.

These hundred men rushed upon ten thousand, clove themselves a passage, and formed a circle around the king, in the midst of which he might breathe.

But, as soon as he was free, Don Henry changed his horse for that of a squire, threw off his battered helmet, took another from the hands of a page, made sure that his sword still held firm to the hilt, and, strong as another Antæus, who requires only to touch the earth, said, "Friends!

* We have no good equivalent in English for *plateau* (a flat space on the summit of a declivity), and the word has become naturalised in military matters where its use is absolutely indispensable. *Table-land* approaches the signification; but it is a somewhat clumsy, besides being a compound word. Further, it conveys the idea of a great extent of flat surface, like that of *Steppe*.—TRANSLATOR.

* The very conception of such manœuvring in a combat of cavalry is perfectly ridiculous.—TRANSLATOR.

cried he, "you made me king, now you shall see, if I am worthy of your choice," and he threw himself into the thickest of the fight.

They saw him four times raise his sword, and with every blow, they saw an enemy fall.

"To the king! to the king!" said the constable, "let us save the king!"

And it was indeed full time; the English closed in upon the king as does the sea upon a swimmer. He was about to be taken, when the constable reached his side.

Bertrand took him by the arm, and throwing some Bretons between the king and the enemy.

"Enough of courage as it is," said he, "more would be mere folly; the battle is lost, fly! it is my place to die here, and protect your retreat."

The king refused, Bertrand made a sign, four Bretons seized Henry de Transtamara.

"And now by our Lady Guesclin!" cried the constable, "we will await the enemy's charge."

And couching his lance, he awaited with the men he still had left, the shock of thirty thousand cavaliers; a frightful shock which seemed destined to throw down even the wall which protected the little troop.

"It is here we must bid one another adieu," said Musaron, sending the enemy the last bolt he had left. "Ah! Lord Agenor, there are those frightful Moors behind the English."

"Well then! farewell my dear Musaron," said Agenor, who had remounted, and who had placed himself side by side with the constable.

The cloud of men arrived, threatening and ready to burst upon them; amid the dust all that could be seen advancing was a forest of lances lowered horizontally.

But on a sudden, in the still open space between them, and at the risk of being crushed between the two masses, rushed forth a knight in black armor, a black helmet, with a black crown, and holding in his hand the baton of command.

"Halt!" cried the black knight raising his arm, "he who moves a step shall die!"

On hearing this powerful voice, the horses which had been urged on at full speed, were seen to writhe beneath their bits; several of them touched the ground with their nervous hocks.

The prince then being alone in the open space, gazed with that sorrowful and peculiar look, which posterity has so much glorified in him, upon those intrepid Bretons about to be swept away by such superior numbers.

"Good people," said he, "brave knights, I will not that you should die thus; look, even a god could not resist."

Then turning to Duguesclin, towards whom he had advanced, saluting him—

"Good constable," he continued, "I am the Prince of Wales, and I desire that you should live; your death would make too great a void among brave men; deliver your sword to me, I entreat you."

Duguesclin was a man who could fully comprehend true generosity; that of the prince moved him.

"It is a loyal knight who speaks," said he, "and I can understand English when spoken in that manner."

And he lowered his sword.

At the call of their prince, the English advanced, with lances lowered without precipitation and without anger.

The constable took his sword by the blade, and was about to surrender it to the prince, when suddenly Don Pedro appeared on his foaming charger;

he was covered with blood, and his armour was battered in several places. He had left those who were flying to attack those who still resisted.

"What!" cried he, rushing on the constable, what, would you allow these men to live; why we should never be masters of the country, as long as they exist. No quarter. Death! death!"

"Oh!" cried Duguesclin, "this is a brute beast, and as a brute beast he shall die." Then as the prince was urging his horse towards him he raised his sword by the blade and dealt him such a blow with its massive hilt on the head, a blow that would have felled an ox, that Don Pedro fell back on the croup of his horse, stunned and half dead.

Duguesclin again raised his heavy weapon, but when rushing to meet the prince, he had left an open space behind him, into which two Englishmen had slipped, and while he raised both his arms, one of them seized him by the helmet, and the other by his waist. The one who held him by the helmet, dragged him backwards, while the other who held him by the waist endeavored to lift him from his saddle.

"Messire constable," they cried together, "surrender, or die!"

Bertrand raised his head, and strong as a wild bull, dragged from his stirrups the Englishman who had seized him by the helmet, while slipping the point of his sword beneath the gorget of the one who held him round the body, he ran him through the neck, thus stifling his threats with blood.

But a hundred other Englishmen advanced upon him, each of them ready to strike a blow at the giant.

"Come now," cried the Black Prince in a voice of thunder, "who will be daring enough to lay a finger on him?"

The most impetuous even, instantly drew back, and Duguesclin was once more free.

"Enough, my prince," cried he, "I owe you twice my sword, you are the most generous conqueror in the world," and he tendered his sword to the prince.

Agenor also tendered his.

"Are you mad?" said Bertrand to him, "you have a good fresh horse under you. Fly, and make the best of your way to France, tell our good King Charles that I am a prisoner. If he will not do anything for me, go to my brother Oliver, and he will do the needful."

"But, my lord," said Agenor, hesitating.

"They are not paying any attention to you—go, it is my order."

"Alert!" said Musaron, who desired nothing better than to make his escape, "let us take advantage of being but little folks, we shall come back great ones."

And in fact the Bègue de Villaines, the Marshal, and the great captains were subjects of dispute among the English. Agenor slipped behind all these, Musaron stealthily followed his master, and both of them putting their horses to a gallop, set off at full speed, saluted by a shower of arrows from Caverly and Mothrill, but fortunately too late.

CHAPTER XLIV.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

THE number of prisoners made on this day, had been considerable. The conquerors counted and numbered the men they had taken as if they had been counting and ticketing bags of money.

With Caverley, the Green Knight, some French Adventurers distinguished themselves in that praiseworthy occupation which consists in despoiling the prisoner, after having caused the scribe to inscribe his name, christian name, titles, and rank in the army.

The vanquishers had therefore taken each their share of the prisoners. Duguesclin was in the lot of the Prince of Wales, who had given him in charge to the Captal de Buch.

Jean de Grailly approached Bertrand, and taking his hand, began very politely to draw off his gauntlet, and his esquires then unbuckled and relieved the constable of the various parts of his armor.

Bertrand tranquilly allowed them to do this; they did not use any sort of violence towards him; he was counting and recounting the number of his friends, sighing deeply every time that he found there was one missing from this tacit muster.

"Brave constable," said Grailly to him, "you took me prisoner at Cocherel; see now how fickle fortune is, for to-day you have become mine."

"Oh! oh!" said Bertrand, "you deceive yourself; I took you at Cocherel; at Navarrete you guard me; you were my prisoner at Cocherel; at Navarrete you are my keeper."

Jean de Grailly blushed, but such was the respect which in those days were paid to misfortune, that he abstained from making any reply.

Duguesclin seated himself on the side of a ditch, and invited the Bègue de Villaines, Andrehan, and the rest to draw near to him, for the Prince of Wales had ordered the trumpets to be sounded and to assemble the soldiers.

"They are going to pray," said the constable; "His Highness is a brave and very pious prince. Let us also pray."

"To return thanks to God for having saved your life?" said the Bègue de Villaines.

"To ask him soon to allow us to retaliate," replied Bertrand.

The Prince of Wales after having on his knees, poured forth to the Lord his thanks for granting him so great a victory, called Don Pedro, who had during this time been casting around him looks of dire ferocity, and had not bent his knee for a single moment, but was seemingly absorbed in gloomy contemplation.

"You are victorious now," said the Black Prince to him, "and yet have you lost a great battle."

"How can that be?" said Don Pedro.

"A king is conquered when he cannot recover his crown, but by spilling the blood of his subjects."

"Rebels!" exclaimed Don Pedro.

"And has not God punished them for having abandoned you? Tremble, sire, lest he should punish you in like manner, should you abandon those whom he confides to you."

"Valiant lord!" murmured Don Pedro, bowing, "but for pity's sake," added he turning pale at once with shame and anger, "I owe you my crown; do not be less merciful than the All-Powerful; do not strike me, me who now thank you."

And he put one knee to the ground. Prince Edward raised him up.

"Offer your thanks to God," said he, "to me you owe nothing."

Then the prince turned his back upon him, and entered his tent to take some refreshment, and for the first time during the day.

"My children," cried Don Pedro at length giving loose to his ferocious wish, "despoil the dead: to you belongs the booty of the day!"

And springing on a fresh horse, he bounded across the plain, stopping to examine every heap of dead bodies, and guiding his steed towards the river's bank, on which Henry de Transtamara had fought against the Captal de Buch.

When he reached the spot, he alighted from his horse, placed a long sharp-pointed dagger in his belt, and his feet plashing in the pools of gore, silently continued his search.

"Are you positive," at length he said to Grailly, "that you saw him fall?"

"I am well assured of it," replied the Captal, "his horse fell from the blow of an axe, which my esquire throws with unrivalled skill."

"But he! but he!"

"He disappeared beneath a cloud of arrows, I saw blood upon his arms, and a whole mountain of dead bodies rolled upon him, and completely covered him."

"Tis well! tis well! Let us continue our search," replied Don Pedro with savage joy. "Ah! yonder I perceive a golden crest."

And with the agility of a tiger, he bounded over the dead bodies, and dragged away those which covered that of the knight with the golden crest. Then with a trembling hand and dilated eyes, he raised the visor of the helmet.

"His esquire!" cried he with bitter disappointment, "tis but his esquire!"

"But they are the arms of the prince," said Grailly; "it is true there is no crown upon the helmet."

"Crafty, crafty traitor! The coward has given his arms to his esquire, that he might fly more surely. But I had foreseen all; I had the plain surrounded, he cannot have crossed the river.—And see, yonder are prisoners which my faithful Moors are bringing in—he must certainly be found among them."

"Continue your search among the other bodies," said Grailly to the soldiers, "and five hundred pistres to the man who shall find him living."

"A thousand ducats to him who shall find him dead!" added Don Pedro. "Now let us hasten to meet the prisoners Mothril is bringing in."

Don Pedro remounted his horse, and, followed by a numerous train of horsemen, eager to see the scene which was about to ensue, he galloped toward the other end of the plain, on which was seen a long line of Moors, in their white dresses, driving before them a troop of runaways, whom they had captured.

"I think I see him! I think I see him!" howled Don Pedro, urging his horse forward.

He uttered these words at the moment he was passing close before the Breton prisoners. Duguesclin heard him, and with his eagle eye looked across the plain.

"Ah! great God!" he exclaimed, "what a misfortune!"

These words appeared to Don Pedro a confirmation of the happiness he so eagerly desired. In order the better to enjoy this happiness, he determined to overwhelm the constable by it, and thus strike, at one blow, his two most powerful enemies.

"We will stay here," he said, "you, seneschal, ride on, and order Mothril to bring his prisoners to this spot—in sight of these Breton lords, the faithful friends of the usurper, of the vanquished!—the champions of a cause in which they had no interest, and whose triumph they could not ensure"

To these sarcasms,—to this vindictive rage, unworthy of a man, the Breton hero did not even deign to utter a reply; he did not even appear to

have heard the words Don Pedro had uttered. He was seated; he remained sitting, and went on conversing, with seeming indifference, with Marshal d'Andrehan.

Don Pedro had, however, alighted from his horse, and was leaning on a long battle-axe, and playing with the hilt of his dagger, stamping impatiently with his feet, as if by that he could hasten the arrival of Mothril and his prisoners. As soon as they came within reach of his voice,

"Well! my brave Saracen," cried the King to Mothril, "my valiant white falcon, what game bring you here?"

"Royal sport, my lord," replied the Moor, "see you this banner?"

He had rolled round his arm a piece of cloth of gold, embroidered with the arms of Transtamara.

"'Tis he, then!" cried Don Pedro, transported with joy. "He!"

His threatening gestures were directed towards a knight, armed at all points, with a crown upon his helmet, but without sword or lance; his arms bound round in a thousand turns of a silken cord, from the two ends of which hung a heavy ball of lead.

"He was flying," said Mothril, "I sent twenty of the desert horses after him; the chief of my archers came up with him, but received a mortal wound; but another threw the noosed rope over his horse's neck and brought him to the ground. He had his banner in his hand. Unfortunately, one of his friends escaped, while he was opposing us."

"Off with the crown! off with it!" cried Don Pedro, brandishing his battle-axe.

An archer approached, and cutting the knots of the gorget, brutally knocked off the helmet with its golden crown.

A cry of terror and of rage escaped the lips of the King; a loud and joyful hurrah! was shouted by the Bretons.

"The bastard of Mauléon!" cried the latter. "Joy! joy!"

"Malediction! the ambassador!" exclaimed Don Pedro.

"The Frank!" stammered Mothril with rage.

"Myself!" said Agénor calmly, saluting Bertrand and his friends with a glance.

"Ourselves!" said Musaron, rather pale, but who still distributed, right and left, kicks at the Moor's shins.

"He has escaped then?" said Don Pedro.

"Yes, in good faith, sire," replied Agénor, "I exchanged helmets with his majesty behind a bush, and I gave him my horse, which was quite fresh."

"Thou shalt die!" howled Don Pedro, blinded by his rage.

"Touch him if you dare!" cried Bertrand, who gave a tremendous spring, and threw himself between Agénor and Don Pedro. "Kill a disarmed prisoner! Oh! you are craven enough for that."

"Then, miserable adventurer, 'tis thou shalt die," said Don Pedro, trembling, and foaming at the mouth.

He rushed with his raised dagger upon Bertrand, who closed his fist as if he were about to fell a bull.

But a hand was placed on Don Pedro's shoulder, like the hand of Minerva, when she seized, as Homer tells us, Achilles by the hair.

"Pause!" said the Prince of Wales, "for you are about to entail eternal dishonor on your name. Pause, I say, King of Castille, and let fall your dagger. It is my will!"

His nervous arm had fixed Don Pedro to the spot; the steel fell from the assassin's hand.

"Then sell him to me, at the least," vociferated the frantic king. "I will pay you his weight in gold."

"You insult me! Beware!" replied the Black Prince. "I am a man who would give you for Duguesclin his weight in precious stones; and you would sell him to me, of that I feel assured. But he is mine, remember! Avaunt!"

"King!" murmured Duguesclin, who could with difficulty be restrained, "miserable king, who would massacre defenceless prisoners, we shall meet again."

"I doubt it not," said Don Pedro.

"I count upon it," cried Bertrand.

"Immediately conduct the Constable of France within my tent," said the Black Prince.

"But one moment, most worthy prince, the king will thus remain with the bastard of Mauléon, and he would murder him."

"Oh! I will not say no," replied Don Pedro, with a ferocious smile, "but this one, I believe, is really my own."

Duguesclin shuddered, and cast an imploring look towards the Prince of Wales.

"Sire," said the latter to Don Pedro, "there shall not be a single prisoner killed on this great day."

"Oh! to that I will agree, not on this day," replied Don Pedro giving a significant glance at Mothril.

"The day is hallowed by so great a victory, is it not so?" continued the Prince of Wales.

"Assuredly, my lord."

"And you would wish to do me pleasure?"

Don Pedro bowed.

"I ask this young man of you," said the prince.

A profound silence followed these words, to which Don Pedro, pale with rage, for some time hesitated to reply.

"Oh! my lord," said he at length, "you make me feel that you are the master here, thus to deprive me of my revenge."

"If I am the master, it is to me to command," exclaimed the Black Prince indignantly, "unbind that knight, restore his arms to him, his horse!"

"Joy! joy, to the good Prince of Wales!" cried the Breton knights.

"Ransom, at least," said Mothril, in order to gain time.

The prince looked askance at the Moor.

"How much?" said he with evident disgust.

The Moor did not reply. The prince drew from his bosom a diamond cross, and held it to Mothril.

"There, infidel, take that!" he said.

Mothril with terror bowed his head and murmured the name of the Prophet.

"You are free, sir knight," said the prince to Mauléon, "free! you will return to France, and there announce that the Prince of Wales, delighted with the honor of possessing, though by force, and only for a season, the most redoubtable knight in all this world, will send back Bertrand Duguesclin after the campaign is ended, and without ransom."

"An alms to those French beggars," murmured Don Pedro.

Bertrand heard him. "My lord," said he to the prince, "be not so generous with me; your friends would make me blush for it. I belong to a master who would pay my ransom ten times over, were I to allow myself to be ten times taken, and were I

even to estimate myself, each time, at the price of a king."

"Name your own ransom, then," said the prince, courteously.

Bertrand reflected for a moment.

"Sire," said he "I value myself at seventy thousand golden florins."

"God be praised!" exclaimed Don Pedro, "his pride destroys him! King Charles V. could not find the one-half of that sum in the whole of France."

"That may be possible," said Bertrand, "but as the Knight of Mauleon is going to France, he will be pleased with an esquire to travel through Brittany, and there in every village, in every high road to proclaim these words, 'Bertrand Duguesclin is prisoner to the English! Spin, women of Brittany, spin! from you he awaits his ransom.'"

"I will do it, so help me Heaven!" exclaimed Mauleon.

"And you will assuredly bring the sum to my lord, before I shall have had time enough to become weary of my captivity," said Bertrand, "and which I believe I should not, even were I to remain a prisoner all my life, being in the company of so generous a prince."

The Prince of Wales gave Bertrand his hand.

"Knight," said he to Mauleon, who was overjoyed at being at liberty and having once more his sword, "you have conducted yourself on this day as a faithful soldier. You have deprived us of the great prize for which this battle was fought by saving Henry de Transtamara, but we feel no anger at your having thus opened to us other fields of combat. Take this chain of gold, and this cross which the infidel refused."

He saw that Don Pedro was whispering to Mothril and that the latter replied by a smile, the meaning of which Duguesclin appeared to dread.

"Let no one stir from this spot!" cried the prince, "I will punish with death any one who shall dare to cross the limits of our camp—were he a chief, were he a prince, were he even a king! Chandos," he continued, "you are Lord Constable of England, and as a true knight, you will conduct the Sire de Mauleon to the nearest town, and you will give him the necessary safe conduct."

Mothril being once more overthrown by this intelligent and persevering interpretation of his vile stratagems, turned on his master a discouraged glance.

Don Pedro had fallen from the height of his triumphant joy; his revenge was altogether foiled.

Agénor put one knee to the ground before the Prince of Wales, kissed Duguesclin's hand, who caught him in his arms, saying to him in a whisper,

"Tell the king, that our devourers are now gorged, that they will sleep for a while, and that if he will send my ransom, I will lead them where I promised. Tell my wife to sell the last piece of land we have, for I shall have many Bretons to ransom."

Agénor, who was much affected, mounted a good horse, bid a last adieu to his companions, and galloped off.

Musaron said grumblingly,

"Who would ever have supposed that I should like an Englishman better than a Moor"

CHAPTER XLV.

FEMALE PLOTTING.

A moment after the victory had been decided in favor of Don Pedro; that Duguesclin had fallen into the hands of his enemies; and that Mauleon at the request of the constable had left the battle field to which he was to be brought back disguised in the helmet, and bearing the banner of King Henry, a courier left the same battle-field, and pursued his way towards the village of Cuello.

There were two women stationed at the distance of a hundred paces from each other, the one in a litter with an escort of Arabs, the other mounted on a mule, with a suite of Castilian knights, awaited with mingled feelings of fear and hope.

Donna Maria, for she was the lady on the mule, feared that the loss of the battle would ruin the affairs of Don Pedro, and deprive him of his liberty.

Aissa, who was in the litter, was praying that some event, whether victory or defeat, would restore her lover to her arms. The fall of Don Pedro, or the elevation of Henry, were matters of little import to her, provided that whether following the bier of the one, or the triumphal car of the other, she might once more see Agenor.

The two women had met one evening, suffering from this double grief. Maria was more than anxious, she was jealous. She knew that should his party be victorious, Mothril's sole occupation would be to study the pleasures of the king. She had divined the whole of his policy; and Aissa, in her simplicity, had confirmed this instinctive suspicion.

Although the young girl was guarded by twenty slaves, trusty followers of Mothril, although the Moor, according to his custom, had her securely enclosed in a litter, Maria did not lose sight of her.

The Moor, not being willing to expose the precious treasure to the perils of a combat and to the brutality of the auxiliary soldiers, had left the litter in the village of Cuello, which consisted only of some twenty miserable buildings, and which was at the distance of about two leagues from the battle-field of Navarrete.

He had given the most precise orders to his slaves. In the first place, to wait for him and not allow any but himself to open the enclosed litter. Should he not return, should he be killed in the battle, he had given other injunctions which will be known hereafter.

Aissa was, therefore, awaiting the issue of the battle at the village of Cuello.

As to Maria, Don Pedro, on quitting Burgos, had left her a sufficient guard. She was there to wait intelligence from him; she had a large sum of money and quantities of jewels, and Don Pedro relied sufficiently on her devoted love to feel assured that in the event of a reverse, Maria would be even more faithfully attached to him than during his prosperity.

But Maria would not endure the torment of vulgar minds, jealousy. She mistrusted Mothril, she feared the weakness of Don Pedro, and she thought Cuello at too short a distance from Navarrete.

Therefore, taking with her six esquires and twenty men-at-arms, who were devoted friends rather than servitors, she mounted a chosen Arragonese mule, and without its being suspected by any one, encamped at the foot of a hill, behind which rose the houses of Cuello.

She ascended the hill and saw the battalions of either army advancing; she might have seen the combat, but her heart failed her, the event was so imminently important.

It was here that she had met Aïssa. She had despatched an intelligent courier to the field of battle, and was awaiting his return at a short distance from Aïssa's litter, which the slaves were guarding, lying upon the grass.

The courier arrived and announced the gaining of the battle. Being a military man, and one of the chamberlains of Don Pedro's palace, he knew the principal knights of the enemy's army. He had seen Mauléon when received in solemn audience at Soria. Besides which, Maria had particularly described him to the courier, and he was easily recognised by the bar sinister which on his shield traversed the lion gules issuant.

He came, therefore, to announce that Henry de Transtamara was vanquished, Mauléon had fled, and Duguesclin was a prisoner.

This intelligence, although it gratified every feeling of her pride and her ambition, filled her heart with jealous fear. Don Pedro, a conqueror, re-established on his throne, was the dream of her love and her desire; but Don Pedro, fortunate, envied, exposed to the temptations of Mothril, was an appalling phantom to that anxious, devoted love.

She knew the inherent obstinacy of Don Pedro's character: she feared that should he once become really enamoured of Aïssa, that from that moment all her power was lost, and the ambitious hopes she had indulged in for the aggrandizement of her own children, would vanish like unstable dreams. She remembered to have heard of the atrocities he had committed in his youth, at the time that his father's* court was held in Seville, when, with his companions, the "minions of the Moon," he was the terror of every family, although for a long period it was not known that it was the heir to the crown of Castile and Leon who was the perpetrator of these atrocities. No family, however noble or respectable, was safe from his unprincipled attacks. Wherever there was a woman of superior beauty, these minions of the Moon would in the absence of the husband or the father, attack the house and carry her off in secret, and then as secretly conduct her back to it, after having subjected her to the most gross indignities.

From their mode of action, it might have been conceived that they had spies in every family, so well were they informed of the moment when they could with the greatest impunity commence their attacks. But the presence even of a husband or a father was not always a safeguard to their honor. The minions were always masked and they would burst into a house at dead of night, bind all the male inhabitants and carry off the woman whom they had come to seek.

Donna Maria Padilla knew all this, but there was another circumstance of which she had also been informed, and which led her to reflect more deeply still, for it convinced her that when Don Pedro's heart was really touched by passion, no earthly consideration could prevent his following it up until its final gratification.

The history in itself is of so romantic a nature that we are induced to give it to our readers.

* The valiant Don Alonzo, the IX King of Castile and Leon, surnamed the Avenger, so celebrated in his wars against the Moors. He died while laying siege to Gibraltar, after having taken from them Valencia and Algesiras. The conduct of his son, Don Pedro, deeply afflicted him, and before his death he declared that he desired that his natural son, Don Henry de Transtamara, should succeed him. — *Tras*

Leonora de Guzman, the mistress of Alonzo XI., and the mother of Don Henry de Transtamara, had in her suite at the court of Seville, a lovely girl named Genoveva. Don Pedro chanced to see her one day when he had been summoned to the palace by his father, and at first sight, struck by her surpassing beauty and the ingenuous modesty of her demeanor, he became enamoured of her. Don Alonzo had sent for his son to reprove him for his outrageous conduct toward a Dominican friar who had ventured to expostulate with him on the disorderly life he led, Don Pedro's only reply to which had been a severe blow with the hilt of his poniard on the head of the poor aged monk, whom he left bleeding on the ground.

Don Pedro feigned to be very penitent, said that at the moment this accident had occurred he was much heated with wine, and promised to reform — As a proof of his repentance he voluntarily offered to confine himself within the limits of the palace during a whole month. Don Alonzo was surprised at this sudden contrition on the part of his son, but gladly accepted the proposal, thinking it a good earnest of his intentions.

But this seeming humility on the part of Don Pedro was merely to cloak the designs he had in an instant formed on Genoveva. By thus remaining in the palace he hoped to have frequent opportunities of conversing with her.

It was however some days before he could gain sight of her, for Leonora de Guzman, having been informed by Don Alonzo of Don Pedro's determination, and Genoveva having mentioned to her that she had met Don Pedro in the corridor, desired her to remain in her own apartment, for she much feared that he had some hidden object in this sudden reformation.

At length one morning Don Pedro perceived Genoveva as she was proceeding to the chapel in the palace; he entered it after her, and kneeling by her, entreated her to grant him a few moments' interview. The poor innocent girl flattered by the attention thus paid her by the heir to the throne, at last yielded to his solicitation and promised to meet him on the following morning in the palace garden. These interviews were repeated, and Don Pedro became every day more and more charmed with the beauty and accomplishments of his adored Genoveva. At length he became so earnest in his protestations that the virtue of the young girl took the alarm, and she communicated all that had passed between them to Leonora de Guzman.

This lady, in order to shield her lovely attendant from the licentious pursuits of Don Pedro, persuaded a cousin of her own, a man somewhat advanced in years, Don Diego Meneses, to marry Genoveva, thus giving her a powerful protector, for Don Diego was Grand Justiciary of Seville.

The marriage was privately solemnized, and Don Diego repaired with his beautiful wife to his house on the borders of the Guadalquivir.

Donna Leonora de Guzman gave it out at court that Genoveva had retired to a convent and was about to take the veil.

Don Pedro, through the minions of the Moon, was soon informed of the real state of matters, and determined to avenge himself on Donna Leonora and Don Diego. But in this there was great difficulty, for the Grand Justiciary was of a most jealous disposition, and fully determined to protect the honor of his wife.

His house was situated on an isthmus of the river, forming almost an island, the back part of the house being beneath a rocky precipice three hun-

dred feet in height. On the river's side it could be only approached by one sole landing.

Don Pedro conceived the bold idea of throwing a ladder of ropes from the summit of the rocky precipice; the lower part of this was furnished with hooks to catch upon a balcony on the first floor of the house. One night, at twelve o'clock, Don Pedro with one of his minions, having firmly secured the ladder, descended by it and entered the window opening on the balcony, which was that of Genoveva's room. Don Pedro ordered his minion to lie flat upon the balcony, and not to move until he called him. He then entered the room which was completely vacant. He determined to await there, and a few minutes afterwards heard steps advancing in the corridor; he concealed himself behind the curtains in the alcove; a person entered the room, but instead of Genoveva it was the Grand Justiciary himself, having a long rapier in one hand and a torch in the other. He discovered Don Pedro in his hiding place, and pretending to believe that he was a common robber, struck him several blows with the hilt of his sword.

"Strike with the point," cried the infuriated Don Pedro, "if thou darest."

The Grand Justiciary was too loyal a Spaniard to murder the heir apparent to the throne. He therefore merely desired him to withdraw, but insisted that as he had entered his house by the window he should leave it by the same issue.

Don Diego Meneses was perfectly convinced that Don Pedro had come there by appointment with his wife, and he determined on wreaking on them the most horrible revenge. He repaired to Africa, where the plague was then raging, and having purchased the garments of some ladies of the highest rank who had fallen victims to the horrible contagion, he returned to Seville. He had sent a forged letter to Don Pedro from Genoveva, informing him that her husband was absent and entreating him to deliver her from the horrible captivity to which Don Diego's jealousy had subjected her.

In the meantime the High Justiciary, on his arrival at his house, had shown the magnificent dresses he had purchased to his wife, and telling her that he expected friends to dine with him, requested her to attire herself in the most sumptuous of them, which she did. Shortly after this, Don Pedro and his minions arrived, entered the house, and finding Genoveva, the prince rushed to embrace her. She was already livid from the attacks of the fearful scourge, and at this moment Meneses appeared, also in a dying state, and declared the nature of the malady. The minions of the Moor fled precipitately. Don Pedro remained hanging over his beloved Genoveva until she expired. Meneses had been dead some minutes. But strange to say Don Pedro felt not the slightest symptom of attack.

The remembrance of the devoted attachment which Don Pedro had shown on this occasion filled the mind of Maria Padilla with terror when she reflected on his growing passion for Aissa. And she endeavored to devise the safest means for removing so powerful a rival.

With that audacity which characterized her, she at once decided on the course of action she would pursue. She ordered the men-at-arms to follow her, and descended the hill conversing with her messenger.

"You say that the bastard of Mauleon has fled?" she enquired.

"As flies the lion, lady, beneath a cloud of arrows."

The messenger was speaking of the first flight

of Mauleon, for he had left the field before Agenor had been brought back disguised as Henry.

"Where is it supposed that he was going?"

"To France, as when a bird escapes it flies to its own nest."

"'Tis natural," thought she. "But tell me, sir knight, how many days journey is it hence to France?"

"Twelve, madam, for a lady like yourself."

"But for a person making his escape—like the bastard of Mauleon, for example?"

"Oh! madam, in three days he might defy his most bitter enemy to reach him. Moreover, this young man is not pursued; they have the constable."

"And Mothril, what has become of him?"

"He had been ordered to surround the plain to prevent the escape of run-a-ways, and above all, of Henry de Transtamara, should he still be living."

"He will not then trouble himself further as to Mauleon," thought Maria. "Follow me, chevalier."

She approached Aissa's litter; but as she drew near with her escort, the Moorish slaves rose from the grass on which they had been negligently dozing.

"Answer me," cried Maria, "who commands here?"

"I do, Senora," said the chief, who was moreover to be distinguished by the purple on his turban and his streaming sash.

"I wish to speak to the young woman who is concealed in that litter."

"Impossible, Senora," laconically replied the chief.

"Perhaps you do not know me."

"Oh! yes, perfectly," said the Moor, with a slight smile, "you are Donna Maria Padilla."

"You ought, then, to know that I can command in the name of Don Pedro?"

"The people of Don Pedro, yes," gravely replied the Moor, "but not those of the Saracen Mothril."

Donna Maria saw this commencement of resistance with some anxiety.

"Have you orders to the contrary?" said she in a gentle tone.

"I have, Senora."

"At least you will tell me what they are?"

"To any other but yourself, Senora, I should refuse to reveal them; but to you, all-powerful, I will do so. Should the battle be lost, and should Lord Mothril be delayed, I am to deliver Donna Aissa to him alone."

"The battle has been gained," said Donna Maria.

"Then Mothril will come."

"Should he have been killed?"

"In that case," imperturbably continued the Moor, "I am to conduct the lady Aissa to the king, Don Pedro; for it would be but natural that the king should become the guardian of the daughter of a man who will have died for him."

Maria shuddered.

"But he lives, he is coming, and in the meantime I may surely say two words to Donna Aissa. Do you hear me, Senora?" said Maria, in a louder tone.

"Madame!" eagerly said the chief, approaching the litter, "do not compel the Senora to speak to you, for I have a still more terrible order should such an event occur."

"And what is that?"

"I am to kill her with my own hand, should any communication between her and a stranger sully the honor of my master, or oppose his will."

Donna Maria shrunk back with terror. She knew the customs of the people and the country, customs savage and intractable. The slave would blindly execute the orders of the master, however brutal they might be.

She returned to her knight, who awaited, lance in hand, with his men-at-arms all as motionless as statues of iron.

"I must have that litter," said she, "but it is well defended, and the chief of the Moors threatens to kill the woman who is behind the curtains should any one approach her."

The knight was a Castilian, that is to say, full of gallantry and imagination. He had an inventive genius, and strength and courage to execute his purpose.

"Lady," said he, "that rascal with his yellow face excites my laughter, and I am enraged at his having alarmed your ladyship. He does not surely reflect that should I nail him with my lance to the shaft of the litter, he could not kill the lady it encloses."

"Oh! kill a man who but faithfully obeys his orders."

"Only see what good guard he keeps; he has ordered his companions to prepare their arms."

These words were uttered in pure Castilian. The Moors looked at him with staring eyes, for they understood the Arabic, which Donna Maria had spoken to them; if they understood the threatening gestures of the men-at-arms, they did not understand Spanish.

"See, madam, they will be the first to attack us, if we do not retire. They are blood-thirsty dogs, those Moors," said the captain, feeling a great inclination to display his courage while looked upon by the beautiful eyes of so lovely and noble a lady.

"Wait! wait a moment," said Donna Maria, "do you think they do not understand Castilian?"

"I am sure of it. Speak to them, Senora, and you will see."

"I have another idea," said Maria Padilla.—"Donna Aissa," she continued, in a loud voice, but turning towards the captain, "you no doubt hear me; if you do, shake the curtains of the litter."

At these words the silken curtains were seen to shake several times. The Moors did not stir, being occupied in observing the men-at-arms.

"You see that not even one of them turned round to look," said the knight.

"It may, perhaps, be only a feint," said Donna Maria, "let us still wait awhile." Then she continued to address Aissa in the same manner.

"Your litter is guarded only on one side. The Moors who are completely occupied in observing us, leave the other side of the litter perfectly unnoted. If the litter is closed, cut the curtains with your knife, and slip out of it. There is a large tree about two hundred paces off, behind which you can conceal yourself, obey promptly: that you may be able to rejoin the person that you know of, I have brought you the means.

Scarcely had Padilla uttered these words, which she did as if she had been talking on indifferent subjects to the knight, than the litter was observed slightly to oscillate. The knight and his men made a sort of hostile movement towards the Moors, who on their side advanced, bending their bows and preparing their clubs.

However the Castilians with their faces turned towards the litter had seen the lovely Aissa flying swiftly as a doe across the open space between the litter and the majestic oak. When she had reached it,

"Well then, fear nothing," said Donna Maria to the Moors; "guard your treasure, we will not touch it: only stand aside and allow us to pass by."

The chief, whose features immediately brightened up, stepped aside, bowing; his companions imitated him, and Donna Maria and her escort passed on in all security and placed themselves between Donna Aissa, and the men who had so lately been her jailers.

Aissa had perfectly comprehended everything, and when she saw spread before her the guardian wall of twenty mail-clad men, she threw herself into Maria's arms, and fervently kissed her hands.

The chief of the Moorish archers saw that the litter was empty, understood the stratagem, and uttered a cry of rage. He saw that he had been duped, that he was lost. For one moment he entertained the thought of falling upon Maria's men at arms, but terrified at the unequal nature of the combat, he preferred jumping upon a horse which one of his men was holding and galloped off towards the battle-field.

"There is not a moment to be lost," said Donna Maria to the knight. "My lord I shall be ever grateful to you, if you can succeed in bearing off this lady from Mothril's power, and in conducting her upon the road which the Knight of Mauleon has taken."

"Madam," replied the knight, "Mothril is the favorite of our king; this lady is his daughter, and consequently belongs to him. I shall therefore be robbing him of his daughter.

"You will be obliging me, Sir Knight."

"That is more than sufficient, madam; and should I perish I shall willingly have lost my life to save you. But if the king Don Pedro should find that I have left the post which he had ordered me to maintain near you, what can I reply? The fault would be a much more serious one, for I should have disobeyed my king."

"You are right, my lord; it shall never be said that the life and honor of so brave a knight as you are, has been sacrificed to the caprice of a woman. Show us the road, Donna Aissa will get on horseback and we will accompany her as far as the road which the bastard of Mauleon has taken, and there—well, there we will leave her, and you shall bring me back."

But such was not the intention of Donna Maria; she only intended to gain time by thus appearing to yield to the scruples of the knight. She was a woman accustomed to have a purpose of her own and to succeed in it. She relied on her good fortune.

The knight adapted the pace of his war steed to that of Donna Maria's mule. They placed Aissa on a white mule of rare strength and beauty, the escort then set off at a gallop and cutting across the plain to the left of the field of battle, went at full speed towards the road to France which was traced along the horizon by high birch trees then bending to a fresh easterly wind.

No one spoke: their only thought was to increase the speed of their foaming horses. They had already gone two leagues, the battle field was chequered with black stains from the blood of the killed, with heaps of dead bodies, and the crops which had been trampled under foot, when Maria saw a knight riding at full gallop towards her.—

She instantly recognised his plume and his sword belt.

"Don Ayalos!" cried she to the prudent messenger, who was already making a turn to avoid what might have been an unfortunate rencounter, "is that you?"

"Yes, noble lady," replied the Castilian knight, recognizing the voice of the king's mistress, "it is I, and at your service."

"What news?" said Maria, stopping short her vigorous mule.

"Strange news. They thought they had taken King Henry de Transtamara. Mothril had gone in pursuit of those who had fled from the field, but on raising the visor of the unknown, who wore the helmet of the king, they found it was was the knight of Mauleon, the French Ambassador, who allowed himself to be taken, to ensure the escape of Don Henry."

Aissa uttered a loud shriek.

"He is taken!" she cried.

"He is taken," replied Ayalos, "and when I left the field, the king, maddened with rage, was threatening his life."

Aissa raised her eyes to heaven in despair.

"He will kill him!" she exclaimed, "oh! impossible."

"He was at one time about to kill the constable himself."

"He shall not die. I will myself prevent it," cried the despairing girl, urging her mule toward the battle field.

"Aissa! Aissa! you will bring ruin upon me and on yourself," said Donna Maria.

"He shall not die! I will not have him die!" frantically shrieked Aissa, and she continued to press on.

Donna Maria was endeavoring to recover her self-possession and to devise some means of warding off the fatal consequences of this disaster, when they suddenly heard the tramp of horses rapidly approaching them.

"We are lost," said the knight, rising in his stirrups; "it is a squadron of Moors advancing quicker than the wind, and there is the chief in advance of them."

The feelings of Aissa and Maria Padilla on receiving this appalling intelligence were of a very opposite nature although almost equally agonizing. They gazed upon each other with despairing looks.

Aissa had been completely overwhelmed with the news the knight had brought of the recapture of her lover, and her feelings were the more acute from her having, for a few minutes enjoyed the delightful certainty of his escape, and possibility of her rejoining him before the lapse of many hours. Buoyed up with such a hope, she would have ridden hours without even dreading the fatigues and dangers attendant on such a rapid journey; Agenor was her life, her soul, her world. Without him existence would become a void, a blank, and death itself a thousand times more preferable. Hence her despairing exclamations, her determination to face every peril to save the life of one whom she considered as her husband, the arbiter of her own destiny. She pictured to herself the cruel vindictiveness of Don Pedro; in her imagination she saw him aiming his ponderous battle axe at that head which but four days before she had encircled with her arms, and she saw those lips on which she had imprinted her burning kisses cold and livid, exhaling their last sigh, and breathing their last prayer for their beloved Aissa. She saw Mothril gloating his vengeance with the last agonies of one whom he

had so unceasingly pursued with demoniac hatred. She shrieked with terror at the thought that even her devotedness could not now avert the cruel massacre. The cause which thus again had placed his life in fearful jeopardy, but ennobled him still more in her eyes, for he had perilled life and love to save the existence of a monarch whose cause he had espoused. Could she have given a thousand lives to save him she would have sacrificed them all without a moment's hesitation. Could she have avoided the approaching troop of Moorish horsemen she would have urged her steed across the plain, and have flown to her Agenor.

The crafty combinations of Maria Padilla were all at once destroyed by the untoward intelligence brought by the Castilian knight. Her jealous fears of Aissa now returned, and with redoubled force. Again would she be exposed to the ardent gaze of the unprincipled Don Pedro; again would Mothril's ambitious views lead him to use his daughter as the certain means of confirming the ascendancy he had obtained over the mind of the luxurious monarch. She felt that should Don Pedro once more behold Aissa, her own disgrace was inevitable: she would be banished from the court, and perhaps immured in some far distant fortress, there to eke out the remainder of her miserable existence. Though determined not to abdicate a power she so long had wielded, without a struggle, she felt convinced that Aissa's beauty and accomplishments were antagonists too powerful, successfully to contend against. But Maria was a woman of too proud a nature to allow the workings of her soul to be betrayed by any appearance of terror or timidity, and she eyed the approaching horsemen with more of curiosity than alarm.

As they advanced, and on perceiving Aissa they uttered a terrific shout of exultation, and before Aissa could turn her mule to fly in another direction this furious cavalcade, overwhelming as a wave, surrounded her, the whole escort and Donna Maria herself, who, pale and almost fainting, pressed close to the knight, whose intrepidity did not abandon him for a moment.

Then Mothril, on his Arab horse, advanced from the group seized the bridle of Aissa's mule, and in a voice stifled with fury, cried,

"Where go you?"

"In search of Don Agenor, whom you wish to kill," she replied.

"Ah!" exclaimed he with a frightful grinding of his teeth, "and in company with Donna Maria, I see it now; I see through it all."

The expression of his features became so terrific that the knight placed his lance in rest.

Had there been the slightest chance of escape, Maria Padilla would have persuaded the knight who commanded her detachment to continue their course towards the road to France; but the Moors who were pursuing them were mounted on fleet coursers of the desert, and her mail-clad followers, with their heavy horses, could not pretend to vie in speed with the lightly accoutered Saracens.

"Twenty only, against a hundred and twenty!" exclaimed the latter, "we are lost."



CHAPTER XLVI.

THE TRUCE.

BUT the combat was not what Mothril wished. He turned gently towards the plain, gave a last look at the field of battle, and addressing Maria Padilla:—"I thought, madame," he said, "that our seigneur the king had fixed upon a spot as a retreat for you; has he changed his mind, and are you obeying a fresh order?"

"Orders!" replied the proud Castilian; "do you forget, Saracen, that you speak to her who is in the habit, not of receiving, but of giving them."

Mothril bowed. "But, madame," he said, "if you have the privilege of acting as you please, you do not suppose you have the power of disposing of Donna Aïssa at your will; Donna Aïssa is my daughter."

Aïssa prepared to reply by some furious exclamation; Maria interrupted her.

"Seigneur Mothril," she said, "God forbid that I should bring trouble into your house, those who wish to be respected, respect others. I saw Donna Aïssa alone, in tears, and dying with inquietude, I brought her with me."

Aïssa could refrain no longer. "Agénor!" she cried, "what have you done with my Chevalier Don Agénor de Mauléon?"

"Ah!" said Mothril, "is it not the seigneur for whom my daughter is in trouble?" And a sinister smile flashed across his contracted physiognomy.

Maria made no reply.

"Is it not to this seigneur that, in charity, you were conducting my weeping child?" continued Mothril, addressing Maria. "Say, madame."

"Yes," said Aïssa, "and I persist in seeking him. Ah! your look no longer affrights me, my

father. When Aïssa wills, she wills imperatively. I will find Don Agénor de Mauléon; conduct me to him."

"To an infidel!" said Mothril, whose features, more and more disordered, became livid.

"To an infidel, yes; for this infidel is —"

Maria interrupted her. "Here is the king!" she exclaimed; "he is coming towards us."

The Moor immediately made a sign to his slaves. Aïssa was surrounded, separated from Maria Padilla."

"You have killed him! you have killed him!" exclaimed the young girl. "Well! I will also die!" She drew from her golden sheath a small blade, as sharp as the tooth of an adder, and which shot forth a brilliant ray underneath the sun of the plain.

Mothril threw himself towards her—all his fury had abandoned him, all his ferocity had given place to the most painful anxiety. "No!" he said, "no! he lives, he lives!"

"Who will assure me of it?" replied the young girl, interrogating the Moor with a regard of fire.

"Ask the king himself: will you believe the king?"

"'Tis well, demand it of him, and let him reply."

Don Pedro approached. Maria Padilla threw herself in his arms.

"Seigneur," said Mothril on a sudden, whose head seemed ready to drop, "is it true that this Frenchman, this Mauléon, is dead?"

"No, by hell!" said the king, in a sombre tone; "no! I have not had it in my power even to strike this traitor, this demon; no, he flies, the miserable, sent back to France by the Black Prince; he flies, free, happy, and laughing, like the sparrow escaped from the vulture."

"He flies!" repeated Donna Aïssa; "he flies! is it really true?" And her regard questioned every one present.

But, in the interval, Maria Padilla, who had received positive news, and who knew how to act respecting the safety of Mauléon, made a sign to the young girl that she could remain, and that her lover was safe and sound. Immediately the delirium of the young girl was appeased, like the tempest abates at the return of the sun. She allowed herself to be conducted by Mothril, whom she followed with her head bent down, without perceiving that the king, Don Pedro, fixed upon her a passionate regard, absorbed as she was by the sole idea that Agénor still lived, by the single hope that she might once more see him.

This regard of the king, Maria Padilla noticed, and divined the meaning; but, at the same time, she read on the visage of the young Moorish girl the deep disgust which the cruel words of Don Pedro, respecting Agénor, had raised in her. "No matter," she said, "Aïssa shall not remain at the court; she shall go, I will unite her to Mauléon. It must be so! Mothril will oppose it with all his power; but all lies there—Mothril or I must fall in the struggle." And as she finished forming her project, she heard the king sigh in the ear of the Moor:—

"The fact is, she is really very beautiful! I have never seen her so beautiful as she is to-day."

Mothril smiled.

"Yes!" continued Maria, pale with jealousy, "here is the whole cause of the war!"

The return of Don Pedro to Burgos was celebrated with all the splendor that a decisive victory gives to legitimate power. The rebels had

nothing more to hope for, they submitted, and the enthusiasm of their recantation was as powerful as the entreaties of the Prince of Wales to change into mildness the usual cruelty of Don Pedro. The prince, therefore, contented himself with hanging a dozen of the bourgeois, to have beaten by the soldiers a hundred of the most signal mutineers, and to levy a few heavy contributions for his treasury on one of the richest towns of Spain. And now, being tired of these furious struggles, seeing fortune smile upon him, and feeling the necessity of reposing his mind and heart in the sunshine of gay fêtes, he made of Burgos a royal town. Balls and tournaments succeeded each other without interruption; dignities and rewards were distributed; they forgot war, they almost forgot hatred. Still Mothril watched; but, instead of occupying himself as a prudent minister with events, or a probable breaking out of war, he allowed the king to sleep in profound security.

Already had Don Pedro dismissed the English, discontented; a few strong places, left in the power of the latter, but ill indemnified them, and dangerously so, for the expenses of the war. The Prince of Wales had made and presented his account to his ally. The sum was frightful. Don Pedro, considering it perilous to levy taxes at the moment of a restoration, demanded time to pay it. But the English prince knew his ally, he would not wait. There was then round Don Pedro, even in his prosperity, the germs of such misfortunes, that the most unhappy prince, the farthest ruined of all the conquered, would have preferred his own condition. But this was the moment awaited by Mothril, and perhaps, foreseen by him. Without affecting to be moved, he smiled at the pretensions of the English, in suggesting to the Spanish prince, that 100,000 Saracens were well worth 10,000 English, would cost less, would open to Spain the road to an African sovereignty, and that a double crown would be the result of this policy. He then whispered, at the same time, that the only means of solidly uniting the two crowns on one head, was an alliance; that a daughter of the ancient Arab princes, of the venerated blood of the caliphs, seated at the side of Don Pedro on the throne of Castile, would rally, in one year, the whole of Africa, all the East, in fact, on the same throne. And this daughter of the caliphs, we may well surmise, was Aïssa. Henceforth the road was level for the Moor. He approached the realization of his dreams. Mauléon was no longer an obstacle, since he had departed. Besides, was he really an obstacle? Who was this Mauléon? A chevalier, a dreamer, loyal, frank, and credulous! Was this an antagonist for the sombre and wily Mothril to fear? The serious obstacle, then, arose from Aïssa, from Aïssa alone. But force subdues all resistance. It was only necessary to prove to the young girl an infidelity on the part of Mauléon. This was an easy affair, since when have the Arabs refused to make use either of espionage to discover the truth, or false evidence to support a lie? Another hindrance, more serious, and which caused the Moor to knit his brow, was that proud and handsome woman—that woman still all-powerful over the mind of Don Pedro, from the habit and domination of pleasure.

Maria Padilla, since she had comprehended the plans of Mothril, laboured to countermine them with an ability, worthy in every way of her rare and exquisite nature. She knew, even to the slightest desire of Don Pedro; she captivated his attention; she extinguished the slightest spark

which she had not lighted. Docile, when she was alone with Don Pedro, imperious before all, always mistress, she continued to entertain with Aïssa, whom she had made her friend, a secret intelligence. Speaking to her constantly of Mauléon, she prevented her thinking of Don Pedro; and, besides, the warm and faithful young creature needed not to be reminded of her love; her love, we may be well assured, would not cease but with her life. Mothril, as yet, had been unable to surprise these mysterious conversations, his suspicion slept; he saw but one of the threads of the intrigue, the one he held, the other escaped him, lost in a mist full of artifice.

Aïssa had not again appeared at court; she awaited, silently, the realization of a promise made by Maria, to give her certain news of her lover. And, indeed, Maria had dispatched to France an emissary, charged to find out Mauléon, to inform him of the situation of affairs, and to bring back from him a remembrance to the poor Moorish girl, languishing in the expectation of a speedy reunion. This emissary, an expert mountaineer, and upon whom she could rely, was no other than the son of the old nurse, with whom Mauléon had encountered her disguised as a gipsy.

Such was the position of affairs in Spain and France; thus were opposed to each other two living interests, furious enemies, who only waited to rush upon each other, the moment they should acquire, by repose and study, all the fullness of their strength.

We can now, therefore, return to the Bastard of Mauléon, who, excepting the tenacious love that was to bring him back to Spain, returned to his country, light, joyous, and proud of being free, as the sparrow mentioned by the king of Castile.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE JOURNEY.

AGENOR comprehended all the difficulty of his position. To be at liberty, by the generosity of the Prince of Wales, was a privilege of which many might envy him the continuance. Agénor urged on his horse as much as he could. Thanks to the pressing invitations of Musaron, who, shaking his ears in the joy of still possessing them, made use of all his eloquence to point out the danger of a pursuit, and the delights of a return to one's country. But the honest Musaron lost his time, Agénor did not listen to him. Separated from Aïssa, the chevalier had nothing but his body; his soul was in Spain, uneasy, suffering, lost. Yet such was at this period the sentiment of duty, that Mauléon, whose heart was indignant at the idea of quitting his mistress, and beat with joy at the idea of going secretly to find her, that Mauléon, we say, bravely continued his road at the risk of losing for ever his pretty Aïssa, to accomplish the mission with which the constable had charged him. The poor horse had been too little humoured; the noble animal, which had supported the fatigues of the war, and obeyed the amorous caprices of his master, dropped from weariness at Bordeaux, where Mauléon abandoned him, to take him again on his return. From thence, changing horses, and inventing the system of the post long before Louis XI., of ingenious memory, our traveller fell unexpected, frightened, and fatigued, at the feet of the good King Charles, who was nailing up

his peach trees in the beautiful garden of the Hotel Saint Paul. "Oh! oh! what's this, and what are you come to announce to me, Sire de Mauléon?" said King Charles, whom nature had endowed with the privilege, when he had once seen a man, of always recognising him.

"Sire king," replied Agénor, placing one knee on the ground, "I come to announce to you sad news; your army has been beaten in Spain."

"May the will of God be done!" replied the prince, turning pale. "But the army will rally?"

"There is no longer an army, sire!"

"God is merciful," said the king, in a lower tone. "How is the constable?"

"Sire, the constable is a prisoner of the English."

The king heaved a smothered sigh, but offered not a word. But, almost immediately, his brow became serene. "Recount the battle to me," he said, a moment afterwards. "Where did it take place, to begin with?"

"At Navarrete, sire."

"I am listening."

Agénor narrated the disaster, the destruction of the army, the capture of the constable, and how he had been, almost miraculously, saved by the Black Prince."

"I must redeem Bertrand," said Charles V., "if, however, they will allow him to be ransomed."

"Sire, the ransom is agreed upon."

"At how much?"

"At seventy thousand gold florins."

"And who has fixed this ransom?" said the king, shuddering at the amount of the figure.

"The constable himself."

"The constable? He appears to me very generous."

"Do you think, sire, that he estimates himself at more than his value?"

"If he had valued himself at his worth," said the king, "all the treasures of christianity would not suffice to restore him to us."

But whilst rendering this justice to Bertrand, the king fell into a profound revery, of which Agénor could not mistake the meaning.

"Sire," he said directly, "let not your majesty be in trouble respecting the ransom of the constable. Sir Bertrand has dispatched me to his wife, Madame Tiphaine Raguene, who holds one hundred thousand crowns of his, and who will give them to purchase his ransom."

"Oh! good chevalier," said Charles, cheering up, "he is as good a treasurer then as he is a soldier? I should not have supposed it. A hundred thousand crowns! Eh! why he is richer than I am. Let him lend me then these seventy thousand florins; I will soon return them to him. But do you really think he possesses them?—If he were not to find them?"

"Why, sire?"

"Because Madame Tiphaine Raguene is very jealous of the glory of her husband, and conducts herself yonder as a charitable and magnificent lady."

"Then, sire, in case she has no longer the money, the good constable has given me another commission."

"Which?"

"To journey through Brittany, crying:—'The constable is a prisoner of the English. Pay his ransom, men of Brittany! and you, women of Brittany, spin.'"

"And," said the king hastily, "you shall take one of my banners with three of my men-at-arms, to raise the cry throughout all France! But,

added Charles, do not this till the last extremity. If it is possible that we can repair here the misfortune of Navarrete—villainous name. The word Navarre always brings misfortune to whatever is French."

"Impossible, sire, you will soon see, no doubt, the fugitive prince, Henry de Transtamara. The English will sound victory through all the trumpets of Gascony; and, besides, the poor Bretons, wounded beggars, will return to their country, recounting to all their lamentable history."

"It's true! Go then Mauléon; and if you again see the constable——"

"I shall see him again."

"Tell him that nothing is lost, if he is restored to me."

"Sire, I had another word to say to you from him."

"What, then?"

"Tell the king, he whispered in my ear, that our project marches well; that from the heat of Spain many French rats have died, without having been able to make friends with the climate."

"Brave Bertrand, he must have his laugh even at this cruel moment."

"Still invincible, sire, as great in defeat as in victory."

Agénor took leave of Charles V., who gave him three hundred livres, a magnificent gift, by the aid of which, Agénor purchased two good horses for fifty livres each. He gave ten livres to Musaron, who, all astonishment, buried them in his leather belt, and renewed his equipage Rue de la Draperie. Agénor also purchased Rue de la Heaumerie one of those helmets of novel invention which closed with a spring, and made a present of it to the squire, whose head lent itself so easily to the blows of the Saracens. This useful and agreeable present improved the good appearance of Musaron, and gave him, in presence of his master, the gentle pride of a gentleman squire.

They put themselves *en route*. France is so beautiful! It is so sweet to be young, strong, valiant, to love, to be loved, to have a hundred and fifty livres at the saddle bow, and to wear a head-piece quite new, that Mauléon inhaled in long draughts the pure air; and Musaron bounded on his saddle and stooped in the manner of a gendarme, and as if they would say, the one—"look at me, I love the prettiest girl in Spain;" the other—"I have seen the Moors, the battle of Navarrete, and I have a helmet of eight livres, purchased at Poinerot's, Rue de la Heaumerie."

In this joy, in their handsome equipage, Agénor arrived at the frontier of Brittany, where he demanded of the Duke Jean de Montfort, the reigning prince, permission to accomplish in his domains the visit to Dame Ragueneel, and the raising of money necessary for the constable's ransom.

The commission of Musaron, Agénor's usual negotiator, was delicate.

The Count Montfort, son of the old Count de Montfort, who had made war against France with the Duke of Lancaster, had preserved some rancour against Bertrand, the principal cause of the raising of the Siege of Dinan; but, as we have observed, it was the time of good hearts and noble actions. The young Count de Montfort, learning the misfortune of Bertrand, forgot all enmity.

"Will I permit it?" he said; "why I demand it; on the contrary, let them raise on my domains any contribution they like. Not only would I see

him free, but I would see him my friend, if he returns to Brittany; our land is honoured in having given him birth."

Having thus spoken, the count received Agénor with distinction, gave him the present due to every ambassador royal, and having honoured him with an escort, had him conducted to Madame Tiphaine Ragueneel, who inhabited at Roche d'Airien one of the family mansions.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MADAME TIPHAINÉ RAGUENEL.

TIPHAINÉ RAGUENEL, daughter of Robert Ragueneel, Lord of Bellière, viscount, and a man of the first quality, was one of those accomplished women, such as heroes no longer meet with, either because God does not unite in the same family all his precious gifts, or that the merit of one of the couple usually absorbs that of the other. Tiphaine Ragueneel, in her youth, was surnamed, by the Bretons, Tiphaine the Fairy. She was learned in medicine and astrology; it was she who, in two celebrated combats of Bertrand, had predicted victory to him, to the great astonishment of the wondering Bretons; she who, when Bertrand was wearied with service, and had resolved to return to his home, threw him back by her counsels and predictions into the glorious path from whence he retired fortunate, and with imperishable renown. In fact, up to the war made by Charles de Blois against Jean de Montfort, a war in which Bertrand was called to the command of the army, the hero of Brittany had only occasion to display his forces, address, and the courage, above all proof, of the champion, duelist, and chief of partisans. Thus Tiphaine Ragueneel enjoyed, in the estimation of her husband and in the whole country, an influence equal to that of a great queen. She had been handsome, she was of high lineage. Her cultivated mind gave her the superiority over many of the *prud'hommes* of the council, and she had added to these precious qualities, a disinterestedness without example for her husband. When she learnt that a messenger from Bertrand had arrived, she went out to meet him with her maidens and pages. Anxiety was painted on her countenance, she had, as if involuntarily, dressed herself in the habits of mourning, which, in the present state of circumstances, for they were generally ignorant of the disaster of Navarrete, had struck with a superstitious terror the household and serfs of the manor of Roche d'Airien. Tiphaine then came to meet Mauléon, and received him at the drawbridge.

Mauléon had forgotten all his gaiety to assume the ceremonious countenance of a messenger of mournful augury. He first bowed, and then placed one knee on the ground, subjugated by the imposing exterior of the noble dame more than by the gravity of the news which he was the bearer of.

"Speak, sir knight," said Tiphaine, "I know that you bring me very bad news of my husband, speak!"

There was a mournful silence round the chevalier, and on the many features of the Bretons was painted the most intense anxiety. It was remarked, however, that the chevalier had attached no crape to his banner or to his sword, as was usual in case of death. Agénor collected his spirits and commenced the mournful recital, which the lady listened to, without showing the least

sign of astonishment. Yet the shade that obscured her features invaded more thickly and more painfully her noble countenance. The Lady Tiphaine Raguene! listened, we say, to the mournful recital.

"Well!" she said, when the amazed Bretons had uttered their cries of distress, and repeated their prayers, "you come on the part of my husband, sir knight?"

"Yes, lady," replied Mauléon,

"And a prisoner in Castile, he will be placed at ransom?"

"He has placed a ransom on himself."

"At how much?"

"At seventy thousand golden florins."

"It is not exaggerated, for so great a captain. But this sum—where does he reckon upon obtaining it?"

"He awaits it from you, madame."

"From me?"

"Yes, have you not a hundred thousand gold crowns, which the constable brought from the last expedition, and confided as a *depôt* to the holy monks of Mount Saint Michel?"

"It's true, the sum was a hundred thousand livres, sir messenger; but it is dissipated."

"Dissipated!" involuntarily exclaimed Mauléon, remembering the words of the king;—"dissipated!—"

"As it was agreed it should be, I think," continued the lady; "I have taken the sum from the holy monks to equip a hundred and twenty men-at-arms, to assist twelve knights of our country to bring up nine orphans; and as there remained to me nothing to marry two daughters of one of our friends and neighbours, I have pledged my plate and jewels—there is nothing in the house but strict necessities. However, straitened as we are, I trust I have conducted myself to the satisfaction of Messire Bertrand; and I think he would approve of it, and thank me, if he were here."

These words, *if he were here*, pronounced with tenderness by this noble mouth, in such noble language, drew tears from every eye.

"It only remains for the constable to thank you, madame, indeed, as you merit, and to wait for assistance from God!"

"And his friends!" said some, in their enthusiasm.

"And as I have the honour of being the faithful *serviteur* of Messire the Constable," said Mauléon, "I shall accomplish the task imposed upon me by Messire Duguesclin, in the event of its happening as it does. I have the king's trumpeter, a banner with the arms of France, and I shall traverse the country in announcing the news. Those who would see the constable safe and free, will rise and contribute."

"I would have done it myself," said Tiphaine Raguene!; "but it is better that you should do it, with the permission of Monseigneur the Duke of Brittany first obtained."

"I have this permission, madame."

"Now, dear sirs," continued Tiphaine Raguene!, steadily regarding the increasing crowd, "you hear, those who would show to the chevalier here the interest they bear to the name of Duguesclin, will readily look upon his messenger as a friend."

"And first of all," cried the voice of a cavalier, who had stopped behind the group, "I, Robert, Count de Laval, will give forty thousand livres for the ransom of my friend, Bertrand. This money follows me, my pages bring it."

"May the nobles of Brittany imitate you, generous friend, in the proportion of their riches,

and the constable will be free to night," said Tiphaine Raguene!, tenderly moved at this liberality.

"Come, sir knight," said the Count de Laval to Mauléon, "I offer you the hospitality of my house—you shall commence your collection from to day, and, on my faith, it shall be ample. Let us leave Dame Tiphaine to her grief."

Mauléon respectfully kissed the hand of the noble lady, and followed the count in the midst of the benedictions of a great concourse of people, attracted by the news.

Musaron experienced no joy. He had been nearly stifled by the populace, who pressed upon his legs and kissed his stirrup, neither more nor less than if he had been a knight banneret.

The hospitality of the Count de Laval promised a few happy days to the most sober and most vigilant squire, and, besides, Musaron, it must be confessed, had the weakness of relishing the sight, were it only for its colour of a large quantity of gold.

Already had the collection from one corporation to another increased the mass. The humble cottage gave a day's work, the chateau gave the price of two beasts, or a hundred livres; the bourgeois, not less generous, not less national, retrenched a plate from his table, an ornament from the petticoats of his wife.

Agénor, in a week, collected in Rennes, a hundred and sixty thousand livres; and the ray exhausted, he resolved to commence the exploitation in another vein.

Moreover, it is certain, as the legend says, that the women of Brittany spun more actively their distaff for the liberation of Duguesclin, than they did to support their sons and dress their husbands.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE MESSENGER.

A WEEK had elapsed in which Mauléon had resided at Rennes with the Count de Laval, when one evening, at the moment he was returning loaded with a bag of gold, duly registered by the ducal scribe and the agent of the Lady Tiphaine Raguene!, the worthy knight, finding himself between the town and the chateau, in a ravine bordered by hedges, observed two men of a strange aspect, and menacing attitude.

"Who are these men?" demanded Agénor of his squire.

"On my soul, they look like men of Castile!" exclaimed Musaron, regarding sideways a cavalier followed by a page, each of whom was mounted on a small Andalusian horse, all mane; and with helmets on their heads, and bucklers on their bosoms, had backed their horses against the hedge, to intercept the Frenchmen and question them on their way.

"Indeed, 'tis the armour of a Spaniard, and the long swords, sharp and flat, bespeak the Castilian."

"Does it not cause you a certain effect, sir?" said Musaron.

"Yes, certainly; but this cavalier would speak to me, I think."

"They will take your bag, seigneur. Luckily, I have my arbalète."

"Leave your arbalète in peace; see, neither one nor the other has touched his arms."

"Senor!" cried the stranger, in Spanish.

"Is it to me you speak?" said Agénor, in the same language.

"Yes!"

"What do you want with me?"

"Point out to me the road to the chateau of Laval, if you please," said the stranger, with that politeness which distinguishes the man of condition every where, but the plain Castilian any where.

"I am going there, senor," said Agenor, "and I can serve you as a guide; but I apprise you that the lord of the chateau is absent; he went this morning for an excursion in the neighbourhood."

"Is there no one at the chateau?" said the stranger, evidently disappointed. "What! again seek!" he murmured.

"But I did not say there was no one in it, senor."

"Perhaps you suspect something," said the stranger, raising the vizor of his helmet; for his vizor, as also that of Mauléon, was lowered, a prudent habit adopted by all travellers, who, in these times of mistrust and brigandage, always feared attack and treason.

But scarcely had the Castilian allowed his features to be seen, than Musaron exclaimed:—"Oh! Jesus!"

"What's the matter?" said Agénor, surprised.

"Gildaz!" murmured Musaron in the ear of his master.

"Who is Gildaz?" demanded Mauléon, in the same tone.

"The man we encountered while travelling, and who accompanied Madame Maria; the son of that good old gipsy woman who gave you the rendezvous in the chapel."

"Merciful heaven!" said Agénor, seized with alarm, "what are they come here for?"

"To pursue us, perhaps."

"Prudence."

"Ah! you know there is no necessity to recommend that to me."

During this colloquy, the Castilian examined the two speakers, drawing back by degrees from fear.

"Bah! what can Spain harm us in the middle of France?" said Agénor, assured, after a moment's reflection.

"*Au fait*, merely some news," said Musaron.

"Oh! 'tis this that makes me shudder. I have more fear of events than of men. No matter, we will question them."

"Let us be prudent, however; suppose they are emissaries of Mothril?"

"But you remember having seen this man with Maria Padilla."

"Have you not seen Mothril with Don Frederick?"

"It's true."

"Let us be on our guard," said Musaron, bringing forward his arbalète, which was slung at his shoulder belt.

The Castilian saw the movement. "What do you mistrust?" he said: "we are not enemies. Have we presented ourselves discourteously—or is it the sight of my visage that has displeased you?"

"No," said Agénor, stammering, "but—what are you going to do at the chateau of the Sire de Laval?"

"I will readily explain to you, senor. I wish to meet with a knight who resides with the count."

Musaron, through the holes of his vizor, shot forth a speaking regard to his master.

"A knight—who is named —"

"Oh! senor, do not demand of me an indiscretion in exchange for the service you render me; I

would prefer waiting for some other traveller to pass, who may be less curious."

"It's true, senor, it's true. I will question you no further."

"I had conceived a great hope, on hearing you reply in the language of my country."

"What hope?"

"That of a prompt success to my mission."

"With this knight."

"Yes, senor."

"What harm will it do you to name him, since I shall know his name when we arrive at the chateau?"

"I shall, then, senor, be under the roof of a seigneur who will not allow me to be ill-treated."

Musaron had a happy inspiration. He was always brave when he supposed a danger threatened his master. He resolutely lifted his vizor, and approached the Castilian.

"*Vulga me Dios!*" exclaimed the latter.

"Well, Gildaz, good day," he said.

"You are the man I seek!" exclaimed the Castilian.

"And here I am," said Musaron, unsheathing his heavy cutlass.

"It concerns much of that," said Gildaz; "is this seigneur your master?"

"What seigneur, and what master?"

"This knight—is he Don Agénor de Mauléon?"

"I am," said Agénor. "Well, finish my destiny—I am in haste to know the good or bad." Gildaz immediately regarded the knight with a sort of defiance. "But if you deceive me?" he said. Agénor made a sudden movement.

"Listen, then," said the Castilian, "A good messenger should fear."

"You recognize my squire, *drôle!*"

"Yes, but I do not know the master."

"You mistrust me, then, knave?" cried Musaron, furious,— "Take care, yellow face, or I shall correct you! my knife is sharp."

"Eh!" said the Castilian, "my rapier also. You are not reasonable. With my death my commission would be finished; and you killed, it would be still more so. Let us go, if you please, quietly, to the manor of Laval; and there, let some one, without being forewarned, name before me the Seigneur de Mauléon, and I will thereupon accomplish the order of my mistress."

This word made Agénor start: he exclaimed:—"Good squire, you are right, we were wrong; you come to me on the part of Donna Maria, perhaps?"

"You shall know it presently, if you are really Don Agénor de Mauléon," said the obstinate Castilian.

"Come, then!" exclaimed the young man, with the fever of impatience; "come, the towers of the chateau are yonder, quick, quick! You shall have every satisfaction, good squire. Spur, Musaron, let us spur!"

"Let me pass first, then," said Gildaz, "I beg of you."

"As you like; go, but go quickly." And the four cavaliers hastened the pace of their animals.

CHAPTER L.

THE TWO MESSAGES.

AGENOR had scarcely entered the gates of Laval, when the Castilian squire, who had lost neither a look nor a gesture, nor a word, heard the guardian of the tower say to him:—

"Welcome, Sire de Mauléon?"

These words, joined to the regard full of reproach which Musaron addressed to him from time to time, sufficed to the messenger. "May I say two words aside to your lordship?" he directly demanded of the young man.

"Will this court planted with trees suit you?" enquired Agénor.

"Perfectly, senor."

"You know," continued Mauléon; "that I do not distrust Musaron, who is rather a friend than a *serviteur* for me; as to your companion——"

"Seigneur, you see him, he is a young Moor whom I found about two months ago in the road that leads from Burgos to Soria. He was dying of hunger; he had been beaten nearly to death by the people of Mothril and by Mothril himself, who had threatened him with a poignard for the leaning he seemed to have for the religion of Christ. I found him, then, all pale and bloody, I took him to my mother, whom, perhaps, your lordship may know," added the squire, smiling, "and we dressed his wounds and gave him to eat. Since then, he has been for us a dog devoted to the death. So when, a fortnight ago, my illustrious mistress, Donna Maria——" The squire lowered his voice.

"Donna Maria!" murmured Mauléon.

"Herself, senor; when my illustrious mistress, Donna Maria, sent for to confide to me a dangerous and important mission—'Gildaz,' she said to me, 'you must mount your horse and repair to France; put plenty of money in your *valise*, and take a good sword; you will find on the road to Paris a gentleman (and my mistress described your lordship) who certainly repairs to the court of the great King Charles the Wise; take with you a faithful companion, for the mission, I tell you, is dangerous.' I immediately thought of Hafiz, and I said to him:—'Hafiz, mount your horse and take your poignard.' 'Good, master,' replied Hafiz, 'the time only to go to the mosque.' For with us Spaniards, you know, seigneur," said Gildaz, sighing, "at present there are churches for the christians, mosques for the infidels, as if God had two dwellings. I let the child run to his mosque. I prepared his horse myself with my own; I placed at the saddle bow the large poignard you see attached to it by the silk chain, and when he returned half an hour afterwards, we started. Donna Maria had written for you the letter which is here." Gildaz raised his cuirass, opened his *pourpoint*, and said to Hafiz:—"Your poignard, Hafiz!"

Hafiz, with his tawny coloured face, his white eyes, and the impassible stiffness of his manner, had, during the whole recital of Gildaz, maintained a silence and the immobility of a statue. Whilst the good squire was enumerating his virtues, his fidelity, his discretion, he never winked; but when he spoke of his absence for half an hour to go to the mosque, a sort of redness, faint and sinister, overspread his cheeks, and threw into his eyes something like disquietude or remorse. When Gildaz asked him for his poignard, he slowly extended his hand, drew the weapon from its sheath, and presented it to Gildaz. The latter cut the lining of the *pourpoint*, and drew from it a letter in a silk envelop.

Mauléon called Musaron to his aid.

The latter had fully expected to figure in the scene. He took the envelop, tore it off, and commenced reading to Mauléon the contents of the epistle, whilst Gildaz and Hafiz kept them-

selves at a respectful distance. "Seigneur Don Agénor," said Maria Padilla, "I am strictly watched, strictly spied, and well threatened; but the person whom you know, is more so than myself. I follow you very affectionately; but the person for whom I write to you, loves you still more than I do. We have imagined that it would be agreeable to you, now that you are on French ground, to have what you regret in your possession. Hold yourself ready at the frontier, then, at Rianzarès, in a month from the reception of this advice. The precise date of your arrival at Rianzarès I shall surely know by the faithful messenger I send you; wait there patiently without saying a word. One evening you will see approach, not a litter that is known to you, but a swift mule, who will bring you the object of your desires; then, Seigneur Mauléon, fly; then, renounce the profession of arms, or, at least, never put foot again in Castile; this on your faith as a christian and a knight. Then, rich with the dower your wife will bring you, happy in her love and beauty, guard as a vigilant seigneur your treasure, and bless sometimes Donna Maria Padilla, a poor, unhappy woman, whose adieu you have herein."

Mauléon felt himself affected, transported, intoxicated. He started, and snatching the letter from the hands of Musaron, he impressed on it an ardent kiss. "Come," said he to the squire, "come that I may embrace you, you who have, perhaps, touched the garments of her who is my protecting angel." And he madly embraced Gildaz. Hafiz did not lose sight of one of the details of this scene, but he did not move. "Say to Donna Maria——" exclaimed Mauléon.

"Silence, then! seigneur," interrupted Gildaz; "this name—so loud!"

"You are right," said Agénor, in a lower tone; "say, then, to Donna Maria, that in fifteen days——"

"No, seigneur," replied Gildaz; "the secrets of my mistress do not concern me; I am a courier, I am not a confidant."

"You are a model of fidelity, of noble devotedness, Gildaz, and, poor as I am, you shall receive from me a handful of florins."

"No, seigneur, nothing—my mistress pays liberal enough."

"Then your page—your faithful Moor."

Hafiz opened his large eyes, and the sight of gold made a shudder pass over his shoulders.

"I forbid your receiving anything, Hafiz," said Gildaz.

An imperceptible movement revealed to the clear-sighted Musaron the furious constraint of Hafiz.

"The Moors are generally greedy," he said to Gildaz, "and this one is more than a Moor and a Jew together. And he has launched at his comrade, Gildaz, a very villainous regard."

"Bah! all the Moors are ugly, Musaron, and the devil alone knows some of their grimaces," replied Gildaz, smiling. And he returned to Hafiz the poignard, which the latter grasped almost convulsively.

Musaron, at a sign from his master, then prepared himself to write a reply to Donna Maria.

The scribe of the Sieur Laval passed into the court; they stopped him. Musaron borrowed a parchment of him and a pen, and wrote:—"Noble dame, you overwhelm me with happiness. In a month, that is, on the seventh day of the approaching month, I will be at Rianzarès, ready to

receive the dear object you send me. I shall not renounce the trade of arms, because I would become a great warrior to do honour to my beloved lady; but Spain will not again see me, I swear it you by the Christ, unless you call me there, or misfortune should prevent Aïssa from rejoining me; in which case, I would speed to the infernal regions to find her. Adieu, noble lady, pray for me." The chevalier made a cross at the bottom of the parchment, and Musaron wrote under the cross:—"This is the signature—SIRE AGENOR DE MAULEON."

Whilst Gildaz secured beneath his cuirass Mauléon's letter, Hafiz, on horseback, watched, more like a tiger than a faithful dog, every movement of the squire. He noticed the place where the dépôt reposed, and from henceforth appeared indifferent to the rest of the scene, as if he had nothing more to see, and as if his eyes had become useless to him.

"Now what are you going to do, good squire?" said Agénor.

"I leave on my indefatigable horse, seigneur; I must arrive in twelve days with my mistress, such is her order; I must, therefore, be diligent. It is true I am not very distant; there is, they say, a road that cuts through Poitiers."

"It's true. *Au revoir*, Gildaz! adieu, good Hafiz! By heaven! it shall not be said, that if you refuse the gratification of a master, you refuse the present of a friend." And Agénor unfastened the chain of gold, worth a hundred livres, and threw it round the neck of Gildaz.

Hafiz smiled, and his swarthy face was strangely lit up with this infernal smile.

Gildaz, much astonished, accepted, kissed the hand of Agénor, and departed. Hafiz marched behind him, as though attracted by the brilliant gold that danced on the large shoulders of the squire, his master.

CHAPTER LI.

THE RETURN.

MAULEON made his dispositions immediately. He now gave way to joy. Henceforth a union indissoluble with his mistress; security in love. Rich, handsome, loving, Aïssa came to him as one of those dreams that the Almighty lends to men until morning, to make them comprehend that there is something besides a terrestrial life. Musaron shared the enthusiasm of his master. A large house to furnish in this rich country of Gascony, for example, where the soil gave sufficient nourishment to the idle, enriched the laborious, and became a paradise for the rich; to command valets, serfs, to fatten beasts, dress horses, arrange hunts—such were the sweet visions which assailed, in a crowd, the active imagination of the worthy squire of Agénor. Already had Mauléon arranged that he could not occupy himself with wars during a year, for Aïssa would entirely engross him, for he owed her, he owed himself, at least, a twelvemonth's happiness, in return for so many painful hours. Mauléon waited with impatience the return of the Sire de Laval. This seigneur had harvested, amongst several noble Bretons, considerable sums, intended to pay the ransom of the constable. The scribes of the king and of the Duke of Brittany compared their accounts, from which it appeared that the moiety of the seventy thousand gold florins were already found. This was enough for Agénor, he hoped that the King of France would

give the rest, and sufficiently knew the Prince of Wales, to be assured that, in case the first moiety of the ransom arrived, the English would set the constable at liberty, if their policy did not counsel them to retain him, *malgre* the integral payment of the sum. But to acquit his punctilious conscience, Mauléon went through the remainder of Brittany with the royal standard, appealing to the people of Brittany. Every time he traversed a hamlet, preceded with the funereal cry:—"The good constable is a prisoner of the English; men of Brittany, will you leave him a captive?" Every time, we say, he met in these circumstances, the Bretons, so pious, so bold, so melancholy, he heard the same groans, the same indignation, and the poor said to each other:—"Quick, to work, let us eat less of our black bread, and amass a sou for the ransom of Messire Bertrand Duguesclin." In this manner Agénor completed six thousand more florins, which he confided to the gendarmes of the Sire de Laval, or the vassals of the Lady Tiphaine Ragueneil, to whom, before he departed, he returned to make his adieu. But now a scruple occurred to him. He might depart, he might receive his mistress; but all was not finished for him in his mission as an ambassador. Agénor, who had promised Donna Maria never again to enter Spain, must, nevertheless, convey to Bertrand Duguesclin the money collected by his means in Brittany, precious money, for the arrival of which, no doubt, sighed the captive of the Prince of Wales. Agénor, placed between two duties, balanced for a long time. An oath, and he had made this oath to Donna Maria, was a sacred matter; his affection, his respect, for the constable, appeared to him also sacred. He mentioned these disquietudes to Musaron.

"Nothing more easy," said the ingenious squire, "request from Dame Tiphaine Ragueneil the escort of a dozen armed men to accompany the money; the Sire de Laval will readily add four lances; the King of France will give, provided it costs him nothing, a dozen men-at-arms; with this troop, which you will command as far as the frontier, the money will be in perfect safety. Once at Rianzarès, you write to the Prince of Wales, who will send you a safe conduct; the money will thus pass safely to the constable."

"But me—my absence?"

"The pretext of a vow."

"A lie!"

"'Tis not a lie, since in fact, you have sworn to Donna Maria. Besides, were it a lie, the happiness is worth a sin."

"Musaron!"

"Eh! monsieur, don't play the religious so; you marry a Saracen, that I think is really a mortal sin."

"It's true," sighed Mauléon.

"And then," continued Musaron, "the Seigneur Constable will be very difficult, if he must have you with the money. But, believe me, I know men; the moment the florins shine, they will forget the collector. Besides, when once the constable is in France, if he wishes to see you, he will see you; you will not bury yourself, I suppose."

Agénor did as usual, he yielded. Musaron, too, was right. The Sire de Laval furnished the men-at-arms; the Lady Tiphaine Ragueneil armed twenty vassals; the Seneschal of the Maine furnished twelve men-at-arms in the name of the king; and Agénor, taking with him one of the younger brothers of Duguesclin, departed, at long stages,

for the frontier, eager as he was to anticipate, by two or three days at least, the rendezvous fixed by Donna Maria de Padilla. The transport of the thirty-six thousand florins of gold, destined for the redemption of the constable, was a triumphal march. The few companions who remained in France, since the departure of the companies, were brigands, of very humble pretensions, and for whom the prey, very enticing no doubt, was not within reach. They preferred, therefore, on seeing it pass before their ranks, to utter chivalric acclamations, to bless the name of the glorious prisoner, and give themselves airs of respect, unable to be disrespectful without the chance of leaving their bones on the field of battle. Mauléon so skilfully directed his march, that he arrived, in fact, on the fourth day of the month at Rianzarès, a small hamlet destroyed many years since, but which, at that time, enjoyed some renown, being a place of passage much frequented between France and Spain.

CHAPTER LII.

RIANZARES.

AGENOR chose in this hamlet, seated on the slope of a hill, a residence from whence he could easily discover the white and devious road which rose between two walls of pointed rock. The troop reposed, however, and they all needed it. Musaron had composed, in his handsomest style, an epistle to the constable, and another to the Prince of Wales, to advise both one and the other of the arrival of the gold florins. A man-at-arms, escorted by a squire from Brittany, chosen from the vassals of Dame Tiphaine Raguene, had been dispatched towards Burgos, where, it was said, the prince was staying at this moment, on account of the reports of war lately sprung up in the country. Every day Mauléon calculated, with the perfect knowledge he had of the localities, the steps of Gildaz and Hafiz. According to his calculations, the two messengers ought to have crossed the frontier a fortnight since, at the least. In this fortnight they had had the time to see Donna Maria, and the latter could have prepared the flight of Aïssa. A good mule, makes twenty leagues in the day; five or six days would suffice, then, for the fair Moresca to arrive at Rianzarès. Musaron discreetly obtained some information as to the passage of the squire Gildaz. It did not seem possible, in fact, that the two men could have passed the defile of Rianzarès, a spot easy, sure, and known. But the mountaineers replied that, at the period spoken of by Mauléon, they had only seen one cavalier pass, a Moor, young, and of a ferocious mien.

"A Moor, young?"

"Twenty, at the most," replied the countryman.

"He was dressed in red, perhaps?"

"With a Saracen morion; yes, seigneur."

"Armed?"

"With a large poignard, hung at the bow of his saddle by a chain of silk."

"And you say that he passed Rianzarès alone?"

"Absolutely alone."

"What did he say?"

"He found a few words of Spanish, which he spoke badly, and quick, enquired if the passage through the rock was safe for horses, and if the little river at the base of the hill was fordable; and, upon our affirmations, he pushed his little black horse, and disappeared."

"Alone! 'tis strange," said Mauléon.

"Hum!" said Musaron, "alone—'tis singular."

"Gildaz must have determined to enter the frontier by another point, to avoid suspicions; what do you think of it, Musaron?"

"I think that Hafiz had a very ugly countenance."

"What tells, besides," replied Mauléon, pensive, "that it was Hafiz who passed through Rianzarès —"

"It is better not to believe it, in fact,"

"And then, I have remarked," added Mauléon, "that the man all but arrived at the height of happiness distrusts everything, and sees in everything an obstacle."

"Ah! sir, you are close upon happiness indeed, and 'tis to-day, if we are not deceived, that Aïssa should arrive. It will be right that during the whole night we keep a sharp look out in the neighbourhood of the river."

"Yes, for I should not like our companions to see them arrive; I fear the effect of this flight on their somewhat narrow minds. A Christian in love with a Moorish girl, is enough to trouble the courage of the most intrepid; they would attribute to me all the misfortunes that have happened, as a punishment from God. But, despite myself, the Moor alone, dressed in red, having a poignard at his saddle-bow—this resemblance to Hafiz preoccupies me."

"A few moments more, some few hours, some days at the farthest, and we shall know what to think of it," replied the philosopher. "Until then, monsieur, as we have no reason for being sad, let us live in joy, if you please."

This, indeed, was the best that Agénor could do; he lived in joy, and waited. But the first day, the seventh day of the month, passed, and nothing appeared on the route, except buyers and sellers of wool, and wounded soldiers, or chevaliers, having fled from Navarrete, and on foot, ruined, making short stages through the woods, or long turns through the mountains, and thus regaining their native country after a thousand anguishes and a thousand privations.

Agénor learnt from these poor men that in many places the war had already rekindled; that the tyranny of Don Pedro, lulled by that of Mothril, weighed insupportably on the Castilians; that several emissaries of the pretendant, vanquished at Navarrete, traversed the villages, exciting prudent men against the abuse of the established power. These fugitives asserted that they had already seen several corps organized with the hope of a speedy return of Henry de Transtamara. They added that a good number of their companions had seen the letters of this prince, in which he promised to return soon with an army levied in France. All these reports of war inflamed the belligerent spirit of Agénor, and as Aïssa did not arrive, love could not calm in him the fever that burns in young men at the clash of arms.

Musaron began to despair; he knit his brow oftener than was usual with him, and returned very bitterly to his suspicions of Hafiz, to whom he obstinately attributed, as to a malicious demon, the delay of Aïssa, to say no more, he added, when his ill-humour was at his height.

As to Mauléon, like the body that seeks its soul, he wandered incessantly on the road, of which, his eyes, familiarised with all its sinuosities, knew every bush, every stone, every shade, and he could predict the step of a mule at two leagues distance.

Aïssa did not arrive; nothing came from Spain; but, on the contrary, there arrived from France, at intervals as regular as the pendulum of a clock

troops of armed men, who took up their position in the environs, and appeared to wait for a signal to enter simultaneously. The chiefs of these different troops turned out upon the arrival of each fresh troop, exchanged in a few minutes a password and some instructions, which appeared to them satisfactory, for, without further precaution, men of all arms and of all countries traded together, and lived in perfect harmony.

The day on which Mauléon, less occupied than Aïssa, resolved to hear more of these arrivals of men and horses, he learnt that these different troops awaited a distinguished chief and fresh reinforcements to re-enter Spain.

"And the name of the chief?" he enquired.

"We are ignorant of it; he will inform us himself."

"So all are going to enter Spain but myself!" exclaimed Agénor, in despair. "Oh! my oath—my oath!"

"Eh! monsieur," replied Musaron, "grief drives away your senses. There is no longer an oath if Donna Aïssa does not arrive; she arrives not, let us push forward."

"It is not yet time, Musaron; hope remains to me. I have still some hope; I shall always have it, for I shall always love."

"I would gladly have half-an-hour's conversation with that little tawny, Hafiz," grumbled Musaron. "I would merely look at him but face to face."

"Eh! what could Hafiz do against the all-powerful will of Donna Maria? 'Tis her we must accuse, Musaron—her, or else my ill-luck."

Another week passed and nothing arrived from Spain. Agénor nearly became mad with impatience, and Musaron with rage. At the end of this week there were five thousand armed men spread over the frontier. Carts, loaded with provisions, some loaded with money, they said accompanied these imposing forces.

The men of the Sire de Laval, the Bretons of Tiphaine Raguene, also waited impatiently for the return of their messenger, to know if the Prince of Wales consented to liberate the constable. At length the messenger returned, and Agénor ran with eagerness to the river to meet him.

The man-at-arms had seen the constable—had embraced him—had been feasted by the English prince, and had received from the Princess of Wales a magnificent present. This princess had condescended to tell him that she awaited the brave Chevalier de Mauléon to recompense his devotedness, and that virtue honoured every man, whatever nation he belonged to. The messenger added, that the prince had accepted the thirty-six thousand florins on account, and that the princess, seeing him hesitate a moment, had said:—"Sire my husband, I wish the good constable to be liberated through me, who admire him as much as his compatriots. We are almost Bretons, we are of Great Britain; I shall pay thirty thousand florins for the ransom of Messire Bertrand."

It resulted that the constable would be free, if he were not already so before the payment. This news made every Breton bound with joy who escorted the ransom, and as joy is more communicative than grief, all the troops assembled near Rianzarès had, on learning the result of the embassy, uttered an hurrah of joy, at which the old mountains had trembled even to their roots of granite.

"Let us enter Spain," the Bretons cried, "and bring back our constable!"

"It must be so," said Musaron quietly to

Agénor. "No Aïssa; no oath; time flies, let us march, monsieur."

And Mauléon, yielding to his anxious disquietude, replied:—"Let us march!"

The little troop, accompanied by the vows and benedictions of all, crossed the defile, nine days after the day fixed by Maria Padilla for the arrival of the young Moorish girl.

"We shall, perhaps, meet her on our road," said Musaron, in order to induce his master to decide.

As for ourselves, preceding them to the court of Don Pedro, we shall probably discover and inform the reader of the cause of this delay of bad augury.

CHAPTER LIII.

GILDAZ.

DONNA MARIA was on her terrace, counting the days and the hours, for she expected for herself and for Aïssa, or rather she felt some misfortune in the persevering calmness of the Moor.

Mothril was not a man thus to sleep; never had he so dissembled his thirst for vengeance, which nothing had announced to his enemies for a whole fortnight. Entirely occupied with giving fêtes to the king, with bringing gold to the coffers of Don Pedro, quite ready to effect the entrance of the auxiliary Saracens into Spain, and at length to unite the two promised crowns on the brow of his master, such were his apparent occupations. He neglected Aïssa, he saw her but once every evening, and generally accompanied by Don Pedro, who sent to the young girl the rarest and most magnificent presents.

Aïssa, prejudiced at first by her love for Mauléon, and then by her friendship for Donna Maria, accepted the presents, free to despise them when once received; and showing the same coldness towards Don Pedro, without suspecting that she thus irritated an ardent desire, she found for this loyal conduct an acknowledgment in the regard of Maria when she met her.

Donna Maria told her also by a similar regard:—"Hope! the plan we have arranged ripens every day in its shade; my messenger will return, and will bring you both the love of your handsome knight and the liberty, without which, there is no real love." At length the day that Donna Maria so ardently desired shone for her. It was one of those mornings that burst forth in the summer under the splendid skies of Spain; the dew trembled on every leaf upon the flowery terraces of Aïssa, when Donna Maria saw enter her chamber the old woman with whom we are acquainted.

"Senora!" she said with a long sigh; "senora!"

"Well! what is it?"

"Senora, Hafiz is there."

"Hafiz! who is Hafiz?"

"The companion of Gildaz, senora."

"What! Hafiz, and no Gildaz?"

"Hafiz and no Gildaz, yes, senora."

"My God! let him enter. Do you know any more?"

"No! Hafiz has told me nothing, nothing; and I weep, you see, senora, because the silence of Hafiz is more cruel than all the sinister words of the other."

"Come, console yourself," said Donna Maria, trembling; "console yourself, 'tis nothing, a delay, no doubt, and that's all."

"Then why did not Hafiz also delay?"

"On the contrary, look you, 'tis this that re-

assures me, the return of Hafiz; certainly, Gildaz would not have kept him with him knowing me uneasy; he sends him, therefore, the news is good."

The nurse was not easily consoled; besides, there was but little truth in the consolations too hastily offered by her mistress.

Hafiz entered. He was calm and humble as usual. His eye showed respect, like the eye of tigers and cats, which, dilated in the presence of those they fear, contract and half close themselves when they regard with anger or a dominating will.

"What, alone?" said Maria Padilla.

"Alone, yes, madame," timidly replied Hafiz.

"And Gildaz?"

"Gildaz, mistress," replied the Saracen, looking round him; "Gildaz is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Maria Padilla, who joined her two hands in anguish; "dead! poor fellow! is it possible?"

"Madame, he was attacked with fever on his road."

"He, so robust?"

"Robust, indeed; but the will of God is more powerful than that of man," sententiously replied Hafiz.

"A fever, oh! and why did he not apprise me of it?"

"Madame," said Hafiz, "we were both travelling in Gascony, in a defile, we were attacked by the mountaineers, whom the sound of gold had attracted."

"The sound of gold? how imprudent!"

"The French monsieur had given us some gold, he was so joyful! Gildaz thought himself alone in these mountains, alone with me, and he took the caprice of reckoning our treasure; he was then suddenly hit by an arrow, and we saw approach several armed men. Gildaz was brave, we defended ourselves."

"My God!"

"As we were yielding, for Gildaz was wounded, his blood flowed."

"Poor Gildaz! and you?"

"Me also, mistress," said Hafiz, drawing back his wide sleeve, which showed his naked arm furrowed by the blade of a poignard; as we were wounded, they took our gold, and the robbers fled immediately."

"What next, my God, what next?"

"Afterwards, mistress, Gildaz was seized with fever, and he felt himself near death."

"Did he say nothing to you?"

"Yes, mistress, when his eyes became heavy, 'listen,' he said to me, 'you will escape; be as faithful as I have been; hasten to our mistress, and deliver into her hands the deposit confided to me by the French *maitre*.' Here is the deposit." Hafiz drew from his bosom an envelop of silk, completely perforated by a poignard, and stained with blood.

Donna Maria, shuddering, touched the satin with horror, and examining it:—"This letter has been opened," she said.

"Opened!" said the Saracen, staring with astonishment.

"Yes, the seal is broken."

"I know not," said Hafiz."

"You have opened it yourself?"

"Me! I cannot read, mistress."

"Some one, then?"

"No, mistress, notice well, see, in the place of the seal this opening, the arrow of the mountaineer has pierced the wax and the parchment."

"It's true! it's true!" said Donna Maria, still suspicious.

"And the blood of Gildaz is round the cuts, mistress."

"It's true! poor Gildaz." And the young woman, fixing a last regard on the Saracen, found so calm, so stupid, so perfectly still this youthful physiognomy, that she could not retain a suspicion. "Recount me the end, Hafiz."

"The end, mistress, is that Gildaz had scarcely handed me the letter, when he expired; I immediately resumed my course as he had told me, and poor, hungry, but still journeying, I am come to bring you the message."

"Oh! you shall be well rewarded, child," said Donna Maria, affected even to tears; "yes, you shall not quit me, and if you are faithful—if you are intelligent——"

A flash appeared on the features of the Moor, a flash that died away as quickly as it appeared.

Maria then read the letter we have seen, compared the dates, and yielding herself to the natural impetuosity of her character, "Come!" she said to herself, "come to the work!" She gave the Saracen a handful of gold, saying to him:—"Repose yourself, good Hafiz; and in a few days hold yourself ready, I shall want you."

The young man departed, radiant; he touched the threshold, bearing off his joy and his gold, when the groans of the nurse burst forth loudly. She had just learnt the fatal news.

CHAPTER LIV.

OF THE MISSION OF HAFIZ, AND HOW HE FULFILLED IT.

ON the eve of the day on which Hafiz had brought to Donna Maria the letter from France, a shepherd presented himself at the gates of the town, and had demanded to speak with the Seigneur Mothril.

Mothril, occupied in saying his prayers at the mosque, quitted every thing to follow this singular messenger, who could not announce a very high or very powerful ambassador. Mothril, scarcely outside the gate with his guide, had perceived on the heath a little Andalusian horse browsing on the herbage, and, reclining on the thin grass intermixed with the stones, the Saracen Hafiz, who was watching every one that issued from the town.

The shepherd, paid by Mothril, had ran gaily to join his meager goats on the hill side. Mothril, forgetting all etiquette, had seated himself, he, the first minister, near the sombre child with the sullen face.

"God be with you, Hafiz! you are returned, then?"

"Yes, master, here I am."

"And you have left your companion so far behind, that he suspects nothing?——"

"Very far, seigneur, and most assuredly he suspects nothing."

Mothril knew his messenger—he knew the necessity of euphemism common with all the Arabs, with whom it is a cardinal point to evade as long as possible pronouncing the word *dead*.

"You have the letter?" he said.

"Yes, seigneur."

"How did you procure it?"

"If I had demanded it of Gildaz, he would have refused it; if I had attempted to take it by force, he would have beaten me, and no doubt killed me, being stronger than myself."

"You made use of address?"

"I waited till he had arrived with me in the heart of the mountain, which serves as a frontier between France and Spain. The horses were very tired, Gildaz allowed them to repose; himself fell asleep on the moss at the foot of a large rock. I chose this moment; I approached Gildaz by crawling and struck him in the breast with my poignard; he stretched out his arms, uttering a dull sound, and his hands were moistened with blood; but he was not dead, I knew it well; he was enabled to draw his cutlass and strike me in the left arm; I pierced his heart with my point, he immediately expired. The letter was in his *pourpoint* I drew it out. Journeying all night in the direction of the wind with my little horse, I abandoned the corpse and the other horse to the wolves and vultures; I cleared the frontier, and, without being disturbed, I finished my route. Here is the letter I promised you."

Mothril took the parchment, the seal of which was quite perfect, but which, however, had been pierced through and through by the poignard of Hafiz on the heart of Gildaz. With an arrow he took from the quiver of a sentinel, he pierced the seal in such a manner, that the silk of the seal was broken, and he greedily read the contents. "Good!" he said; "we will all be at this rendezvous;" and he began to reflect. Hafiz waited.

"What shall I do, *maitre*?"

"You shall remount your horse and take this letter; you will knock at sunrise at the gates of Donna Maria. You will announce to her that the mountaineers attacked Gildaz, and wounded him with arrows and poignards; that in dying, he delivered you the letter. This will be all."

"Good, master."

"Go, journey all night; that your garments in the morning may be moistened with the dew, your horse with sweat, as if you only arrived that morning; and, then, await my orders, and for a week approach not my house."

"Is the prophet satisfied with me?"

"Yes, Hafiz."

"Thanks, master."

We now see how the letter had been unsealed; and the nature of the storm that was gathering over the head of Donna Maria.

Mothril, however, did not confine himself to what he had done. He awaited the morning, and dressing himself in magnificent habits, he went to seek Don Pedro. The Moor, on entering the king's apartment, found the prince seated in a large arm chair of velvet, and mechanically playing with the ears of a young wolf, which he loved to tame. On his left, in a similar chair, was seated Donna Maria, pale, and apparently irritated. In fact, since she had been there, so near Don Pedro, the prince, occupied, no doubt, with other thoughts, had not spoken a word to her.

Mothril entered, and it was an opportunity for Maria Padilla to quit the room with a bounce.

"You go, madame?" said Don Pedro, uneasy, despite himself, at this furious sortie, which he had provoked by the indolent reception given to his mistress.

"Yes, I go," she said; "and I indulge that graciousness of which you, no doubt, make a provision for the Saracen Mothril."

Mothril heard, but he did not appear irritated. If Donna Maria had been less furious, she would have discovered that the calmness of the Moor sprung from some secret assurance of an approaching triumph; but anger does not calculate, it carries sufficient satisfaction with it; it is

really a passion. He who softens it, finds a pleasure in it.

"Sire," said Mothril, affecting a profound grief; "I see my king is not happy."

"No!" replied Don Pedro, with a sigh.

"We have much gold," added Mothril; "Cordova has contributed."

"So much the better," said the king, negligently.

"Seville arms twelve thousand men," continued Mothril; "we gain two provinces."

"Oh!" said the king, in the same tone.

"If the usurper re-enters Spain, I hope, within a week from hence to confine him in some chateau—to take him."

Never had this name of usurper failed to excite in the king a violent tempest; on this occasion, Don Pedro contented himself by saying calmly: "Let him come! you have gold, soldiers—we shall take him, we will have him tried, and take off his head."

Mothril at this moment approached the king:—"Yes, my king is very unhappy," he said again.

"And why, friend?"

"Because gold does not delight you; because power disgusts you; because you see nothing sweet in vengeance; because, in fact, you no longer find for your mistress a smile of love."

"Undoubtedly, I love her no longer, Mothril, and with this void in my heart, nothing now appears desirable to me."

"When the heart appears so empty, king, is it not full of desires? Desire, you know, is as the air enclosed in a bladder."

"I know it yes, my heart is full of desires."

"You love, then?"

"Yes, I think I love——"

"You love Aïssa, the daughter of a powerful monarch. Ah! I pity you, and envy you at the same time, for you must be very happy or much to be pitied, seigneur."

"It's true, Mothril, I am much to be pitied."

"She loves you not, you would say?"

"No, she does not love me."

"Think you, seigneur, that the blood, pure as that of a goddess, is agitated with the passions to which another woman would yield? Aïssa would be of no value in the harem of a voluptuous prince; Aïssa is a queen, she will smile but on a throne. There are flowers, you see, my king, which only blossom on the summit of the mountain."

"A throne! I marry Aïssa! Mothril, what would the christians say?"

"What tells you, seigneur, that Aïssa, loving you because you would be her husband, would not make you the sacrifice of her God, she who will have given you her soul?"

A sigh, almost voluptuous, escaped from the bosom of the king:—"She would love me?"

"She will love you."

"No, Mothril."

"Well, seigneur, bury yourself in grief then, for you are not worthy of being happy; for you despair before the time."

"Aïssa avoids me."

"I thought the christians more ingenious in divining a woman's heart. With us, the passions concentrate, and efface themselves, in appearance, under the heavy badge of slavery; but our women, so free to say all, and consequently to hide all, render us more clear-sighted to read in their hearts. How would you have the proud Aïssa ostensibly love him who in his journeys is accompanied by a woman, the rival of all the women who would love Don Pedro?"

"Aïssa is jealous?"

A smile from the Moor was his reply; he then added:—"With us the turtle-dove is jealous of his companion, and the noble panther tears with teeth and claws the panther in presence of the tiger, whom either is come to choose."

"Ah! Mothril, I love Aïssa."

"Marry her."

"And Donna Maria?"

"The man who has caused the death of his wife that he might not displease his mistress, hesitates to dismiss his mistress, whom he loves no longer, to acquire five millions of subjects, and a love more precious than the entire world?"

"You are right; but it would be the death of Donna Maria."

The Moor again smiled. "She loves you, then, still?"

"Does she love me! do you doubt it?"

"Yes, seigneur." Don Pedro turned pale. "He loves her still," thought Mothril; "let us not awaken his jealousy, for he would prefer her to all the rest." "I doubt it," he resumed, "not because she is unfaithful to you, I do not believe so, but because seeing herself less loved, she persists in living with you."

"I should have called this love, Mothril."

"And I call this sentiment, ambition."

"You would drive away Maria?"

"To obtain Aïssa, yes."

"Oh! no—no!"

"Suffer, then."

"I thought," said Don Pedro, fixing on Mothril a fiery regard, "that if you saw your king suffer, you would not have the courage to say to him,—'Suffer!' I thought you would not have failed to cry to me, —'I will console you, monseigneur.'"

"At the expense of the honour of a great king of my country; no, rather death."

Don Pedro remained plunged in a sombre revery. "I will die, then," he said, "for I love this girl; or, indeed," he exclaimed with a sinister flash, — "No, I will not die."

Mothril well knew his king, and was satisfied that no barrier was strong enough to arrest the gush of passion in this untameable man. "He will use violence," he thought, "let us prevent this result." "Seigneur," said Mothril, "Aïssa has a noble soul, she will believe in an oath. If you will swear to marry her after having solemnly quitted Donna Maria, I think that Aïssa would confide her destiny to your love."

"Would you engage it?"

"I will engage it."

"Well," exclaimed Don Pedro, "I will break with Donna Maria, I swear it."

"'Tis a different affair, make your conditions, monseigneur."

"I will break with Donna Maria, and will leave her a million crowns. There shall not be, in the country she may choose for her residence, a princess more rich or more honoured."

"Be it so, 'tis like a magnificent prince; but, in addition, this country must not be Spain."

"Indeed?"

"Aïssa would not be assured unless the sea, the boundless sea, separated your old love from the new."

"We will place the sea between Aïssa and Donna Maria, Mothril."

"Good, monseigneur."

"But I am king, you know that I accept conditions from no one."

"'Tis just, sire."

"The bargain, then, a little like a bargain between Jews, must be accomplished between ourselves, without, at first, engaging any other than yourself."

"How so?"

"Donna Aïssa must be delivered to me as an hostage."

"Nothing less than that?" said Mothril, with irony.

"Madman! See you not that love consumes me—devours me; that at this moment I enjoy delicacies that make me laugh? As if the lion had scruples in his hunger! See you not that if you bargain with me about Aïssa, I shall take her; that if you roll about your irritated eyes I shall have you arrested and hung; and that every christian knight will be present to behold your body on the gibbet, and to make their court to my new mistress?"

"'Tis true," thought Mothril. "But Donna Maria, seigneur?"

"My love is hungry, I tell you, and Donna Maria shall see how Donna Bianca de Bourbon died."

"Your anger is terrible, my master," humbly replied Mothril; "he must be mad who will not bend the knee before you."

"You will deliver Aïssa to me."

"If you command me, yes, seigneur; but if you have not followed my councils, if you have not rid yourself of Donna Maria, if you have not discouraged her friends, who are your enemies, if you have not dispersed all the scruples of Aïssa, remember, you will not possess this woman; she will kill herself."

It was now the king's turn to tremble and to reflect. "What would you have, then?" he said.

"I desire that you wait one week. Do not interrupt me! Then let Donna Maria show her temper. Aïssa shall depart for a royal chateau, without any one knowing her flight or the destination of her journey: you will convince this young girl, she will become yours, and will love you."

"And Donna Maria? I tell you."

"Lulled at first, she will awaken vanquished. Leave her to groan and get into a passion, you will have exchanged a mistress for a lover. Maria will never pardon you this infidelity, she will herself rid you of her."

"Yes, she is proud, it's true. And you think Aïssa will come?"

"I do not think it, I know it."

"That day, Mothril, demand of me half my kingdom, it is yours."

"You will never have more justly recompensed loyal services."

"In a week, then?"

"At the last hour of the day, yes, monseigneur, Aïssa shall leave the town, escorted by a Moor; I will conduct her to you."

"Go, Mothril."

"Until then, raise not the suspicions of Donna Maria."

"Fear nothing. I have well concealed my love—my grief; think you I will not hide my joy?"

"Announce, then, monseigneur, that you mean to depart for a country seat."

"I will do it," said the king.

CHAPTER LV.

HOW HAFIZ LED ASTRAY HIS TRAVELLING COMPANIONS.

DONNA MARIA, however, had, since the return of Hafiz, renewed her correspondence with Aïssa. The latter could not read, but the sight of the parchment, touched by the hand of her lover, the cross especially, the representation of his loyal will, had loaded with joy the heart of the young girl, and twenty times did she impress upon it the kiss so fervently solicited.

"Dear Aïssa," said Maria, "you shall depart. In a week you shall be far from hence; but you shall be near him you love, and I do not think you will regret this country."

"Oh! no! no! no! my life is to breathe the air he breathes."

"Then you will be united. Hafiz is a prudent lad, and full of intelligence. He knows the road; besides, you will not fear this child as you would fear a man; and I am sure you will travel with more confidence in his company. He is of your own country, you both speak the language cherished by you. This casket contains all your jewels; remember that in France, a seigneur, although rich, does not possess the moiety of what you will bring to your lover. Besides, my favours will accompany the young man, should he go with you to the end of the world. Once in France, you have nothing more to fear. I meditate a great reform here. The king must drive from Spain the Moors, who are enemies of our religion, a pretext which the envious make use of to tarnish the glory of Don Pedro. You absent, I shall commence the work without hesitation."

"On what day shall I see Mauléon?" said Aïssa, who had heard nothing but the name of her lover.

"You can be in his arms five days after your departure from the town."

"I will take less time by half than the most rapid cavalier, madame."

It was after this conversation, that Donna Maria sent for Hafiz, and asked him if he would not return to France to accompany the sister of Gildaz:—"A poor child inconsolable for the death of her brother," she added, "and who wishes to give a christian burial to his remains."

"I will gladly do so," said Hafiz; "fix me the day of departure, mistress."

"To-morrow you shall mount a mule I will give you; the sister of Gildaz will also ride a mule; and another carrying my nurse, who is her mother, and with a few effects relating to the ceremony she wishes to accomplish."

"Good, senora. To-morrow I will depart. At what hour?"

"In the evening, after the doors are closed and the lights extinguished."

Hafiz had no sooner received this order, than he transmitted it to Mothril. The Moor hastened to seek Don Pedro. "Seigneur," he said, "this is the seventh day; you can depart for your country seat."

"I waited," replied the king.

"Depart, then, my king, it is time."

"All the preparations are made," added Don Pedro. "I shall depart much the more willingly that the Prince of Wales sends me to-morrow a herald-at-arms, to demand the money of me."

"And the treasury is empty to day, seigneur;

for you know we hold in readiness the sum destined to quiet the fury of Donna Maria."

"Good; 'tis sufficient." Don Pedro ordered everything for the departure. He affected to invite to this journey several ladies of the court, but made no mention of Donna Maria.

Mothril watched the effect of this insult on the proud Spaniard, but Donna Maria did not complain. She passed the day with her women in playing on the lute, and making her birds sing. The evening arrived; as all the court had left, and as Donna Maria gave out that she was unaccountably wearied, she ordered a mule to be prepared for her.

At a signal given by Aïssa, at liberty in her house, for Mothril had accompanied the king, Donna Maria descended, mounted her mule, after enveloping herself in a large cloak, such as duennas wore. In this dress, she went herself to seek Aïssa by the secret passage, and, as she expected, she found Hafiz, who, in the saddle for the last hour, searched the darkness with his piercing eyes. Donna Maria showed to the guards her pass, and gave them the word. The doors were opened. A quarter of an hour afterwards, the mules were hastening rapidly towards the plain.

Hafiz went first. Donna Maria remarked that he kept towards the left instead of continuing the straight road. "I cannot speak to him, for he will recognise my voice," she said to her companion, "but you, whom he will not recognise, enquire of him why he thus changes the route."

Aïssa put the question in the Arab language and Hafiz, much surprised, replied to her:—

"Because the left is much the shortest, senora."

"Very well," said Aïssa, "but do not go astray."

"Ah! no," said the Saracen; "I know where I am."

"He is faithful, be tranquil," said Maria; "besides, I am with you, and I only accompany you for the purpose of freeing you in case a troop should stop you in the environs. By the morning you will have made fifteen leagues; no more soldiers to be feared. Mothril watches but in a circumscribed compass, by his indolence and the negligence of his master. I shall then quit you, and you will pursue your route; and I, traversing the whole route, shall knock at the gates of the palace inhabited by the king; I know Don Pedro he weeps my absence, and will receive me with open arms."

"This chateau, then, is near here?" said Aïssa.

"It is seven leagues from the town we have quitted, but much to the left; it is situated on a mountain which we should distinguish if the moon were to rise." Suddenly the moon, as if it had obeyed the voice of Donna Maria, issued from a black cloud, the edges of which it silvered. Immediately a soft and clear light shed itself over the fields and woods, so that the travellers suddenly found themselves enveloped in a clear atmosphere.

Hafiz turned towards his companions, he looked round him, the road had given place to a vast heath, bounded by a high mountain on which rose up a round and magnificent chateau.

"The chateau?" exclaimed Donna Maria, "we have wandered!"

Hafiz trembled, he thought he recognised the voice.

"You have missed your way?" said Aïssa to the Moor. "Answer!"

"Alas! is it true!" said Hafiz, innocently. He had scarcely finished, when, from the bottom of a ravine, bordered by green oaks and olive trees, rushed four cavaliers, whose fiery horses mounted the hill with open nostrils and floating manes.

"What means this?" murmured Maria sullenly—"Are we discovered?" and she enveloped herself in the folds of her mantle without adding a word.

Hafiz commenced uttering piercing cries, as if in fear; but one of the cavaliers applied a handkerchief to his lips and led his mule. Two of the other ravishers spurred the mules of the two women, so that the animals started at a furious gallop towards the chateau.

Aïssa attempted to cry out—to defend herself.

"Be silent!" said Donna Maria to her; "with me you have nothing to fear in Don Pedro; with you, I fear nothing from Mothril. Be silent!"

The four cavaliers, as though they were conducting a troop to the stable, directed their capture towards the chateau.

"It seems we were expected," thought Donna Maria, "the doors are opened without the trumpets sounding."

In fact, the four horses and the three mules entered with a grand noise in the court of the palace. A window was lighted up, a man was seen at this window; he uttered a cry of joy on seeing the mules arrive.

"'Tis Don Pedro, and he was waiting!" murmured Donna Maria; who recognised the voice of the king; "what does all this signify?"

The cavaliers ordered the women to dismount, and conducted them to the hall of the chateau. Donna Maria supported the trembling Aïssa.

Don Pedro entered the hall leaning on Mothril, whose eyes sparkled with joy. "Dear Aïssa!" he said, hastening towards the young girl, who shuddered with indignation, and with an inflamed eye and agitated lip seemed to demand an account of the treason from her companion. "Dear Aïssa, pardon me," repeated the king, "for having frightened you and this good woman; permit me to offer you a welcome."

"And me, then," said Donna Maria, lifting the hood of her mantle; "you do not salute me, seigneur?"

Don Pedro uttered a loud cry and recoiled in fear. Mothril, pale and trembling, felt himself dropping under the crushing regard of his enemy.

"Come! let us be shown into an apartment, our host," continued Donna Maria, "for you are our host, Don Pedro."

Don Pedro, tottering and thunderstruck, bent down his head and re-entered the gallery. Mothril fled—but with him fury had already replaced fear.

The two women drew close to one another and waited in silence. A moment afterwards they heard the doors closed.

The major-domo, bowing to the ground, came to request Donna Maria to ascend to her apartment.

"Do not quit me!" exclaimed Aïssa.

"Fear nothing, I tell you my child, see! I have shown myself, and my look has sufficed to tame these ferocious beasts. Come, follow me; I watch over you, I tell you."

"And you—oh! fear also for yourself?"

"Me!" said Maria Padilla, smiling with haughtiness; "who would dare, then? 'Tis not for me to have fear in this chateau."

CHAPTER LVI.

THE PATIO OF THE SUMMER PALACE.

THE apartment into which they conducted Maria was well known to her; she inhabited it at the time of her power, of her prosperity. At that time the whole court knew the way of the galleries with wooden pillars painted and gilded, of which a *patio*, or garden of orange trees, with a bason of marble, formed the centre. Then were seen pages at the richly brocaded door screens, and valets eager to do the service under these sumptuously lighted galleries. In the *patio* below, under the thick foliage of the trees in flower, were hidden the Moorish symphonies, so soft, so sweetly sad, that they seemed, like slow perfumes, attracted to the sky when they ascend from the lips of the singer or the fingers of the musician. At the present moment all was silent. Separated from the rest of the palace, this gallery seemed *morne* and empty. The trees still possessed their foliage, but it was gloomy; the marble sent forth in waves the bleaching liquid, but with a noise like the groans of a raging sea. At the extremity of one of the long sides of this parallelogram, a small door, arched, led from the gallery of Maria to the gallery occupied by the king. This passage was long, narrow as a paved canal. Formerly Don Pedro had determined that it should always be hung with precious stuffs, and that the floor should be strewn with flowers; but in the long interval of his visits, the draperies became soiled and torn; the faded flowers cracked under the feet. All that has assisted love, fades when love is dead. It is the same with those passionate roots that flourish and twine luxuriously around the tree they love, but which wither and drop inanimate when they can no longer inhale the juice and life of their ally.

Donna Maria was scarcely installed in her apartment when she demanded her service.

"Senora," replied the major domo, "the king did not come to remain, but simply to attend a hunting party. He has not brought a service."

"Good; the hospitality of the king, however, does not permit his guests to be in want of necessities here."

"Senora, I am at your orders, and anything your highness may demand —"

"Give us refreshments then, and a parchment to write."

The major-domo bowed and retired.

The night had approached, the stars shone brightly in the firmament. At the very furthest extremity of the *patio* an owl uttered his plaintive cry, which silenced the nightingale perched on the windows of Donna Maria.

Aïssa, in the obscurity, under the influence of these gloomy events, alarmed at the sullen fury of her companion, kept herself, trembling, at the lower end of the apartment. She now saw pass and repass, like a faint shadow, Donna Maria, her hand on her chin, her eye lost in wildness, but sparkling with projects. She dared not speak, fearing to disturb this anger, and to cause her grief to deviate.

Suddenly the major-domo reappeared, carrying lights, which he placed on a table. A slave followed him, charged with a silver gilt tray; on which two cups of chased silver accompanied fruits, comfits, and a large jug of Xeres wine.

"Senora," said the major-domo, "your highness is served."

"I do not see the ink and the parchment that I demanded," said Donna Maria.

"Senora, I have searched a long while," said the major-domo, embarrassed; "but the chancellor of the king is not here, and the parchments are in the royal coffer."

Donna Maria frowned. "I understand," she said; "very well, thanks, leave us."

The major-domo retired.

"Thirst is consuming me," said Donna Maria; "dear child, will you help me to some drink?"

Aïssa quickly poured out some wine in one of the cups and offered it to her companion, who drank greedily.

"Has he not brought water?" she added; "this wine doubles my thirst instead of assuaging it."

Aïssa searched around, and perceived an earthen jar, with painted flowers, as there are in the east, to keep the water fresh even in the sun. She drew out a cup of pure water, into which Donna Maria poured the remains of the wine in the other cup. But already her mind no longer occupied itself with the wants of the body; her thoughts, wholly absorbed, had regained their sombre range.—"What is it I am doing here?" she said to herself, "why lose the time? Either I must convince the traitor of his treason, or I must attempt to reclaim him once more." She turned suddenly towards Aïssa, who followed with anxiety each of her movements. "Well, young girl, you who have so innocent a look, that I think I see your soul through your sparkling eyes; reply to a woman, the most unfortunate of women, have you pride? Do you at times envy this splendour of my prosperity? Have you as an adviser, at the gloomy hours of night, an evil genius, who turns you from love to push you towards ambition? Oh! answer me; oh! remember that my future destiny is in the word you will pronounce; answer me as you would answer God. Did you know anything of this project of abduction? Did you suspect it? Did you hope for it?"

"Madame," replied Aïssa, in a manner both sweet and sad, "you, my kind protectress, you who have seen me fly to meet my lover with a joy so ardent, you ask me if I wished to meet another?"

"You are right," said Donna Maria, impatiently; "But your reply, which might contain all the candour of your mind, still seems to me a subterfuge; you see, 'tis that my mind is not as pure as thine, and that all the passions of the earth darken and disturb it; I, therefore, repeat my question, are you ambitious; and would you never console yourself for the loss of your love, with the hope of a grand fortune—of a throne?"

"Madame," replied Aïssa, shuddering, "I am not endowed with eloquence, and I know not if I shall be enabled to persuade your grief; but, by the living God, be he mine, or be he yours, I swear to you, that in the event of Don Pedro holding me in his power, and forcing upon me his love, I swear to you that I shall have a poignard to pierce my heart, or a ring, like yours, to inhale a mortal poison."

"A ring like mine!" exclaimed Donna Maria, recoiling suddenly, and concealing her hand beneath her mantle, "you know——"

"I know, because every one in this palace has whispered it; that devoted to the king, Don Pedro, and trembling to fall into the hands of his enemies, you are in the habit of carrying in this ring a subtle poison, to give you freedom when

necessary—'tis also a custom of the people of my country; for my Agénor, I shall be neither less valiant nor less faithful than you for Don Pedro. I will die when I see that he is about to lose his treasure."

Donna Maria pressed the hands of Aïssa, kissed her even on the forehead with a savage tenderness:—"You are a generous child," she said, "and your words would point out my duty to me, if I had not something more sacred in this world to guarantee than my love. Yes, I ought to die, having lost my future and my glory; but who will watch over this coward and this ingrat whom I still love? Who will save him from a shameful death, from a ruin still more inglorious? He has not a friend, he has thousands of thirsty enemies. You do not love him, you will yield to no suggestion, 'tis all I desire, because the contrary was the only thing I feared. Now I am tranquil, and the line I am to follow is traced out to me. Before Aurora shall appear to-morrow, there shall be in Spain a change that the whole universe shall talk of."

"Madame," said Aïssa, "beware of the hastiness of your courageous spirit; remember that I am alone in the world, that I have neither hope or happiness, but in you and by you."

"I think of all this, misfortune purifies my mind; I am no longer selfish, having no longer a vulgar love. Listen, Aïssa, my part is taken; I shall seek Don Pedro. Search well in the casket inlaid with gold in the next room, you will find a key. 'Tis the key of a secret door adjoining the apartments of Don Pedro."

Aïssa left, and returned with the key, of which Marie took possession:—"Must I remain alone in this gloomy dwelling, madam?" said Aïssa.

"I know of a retreat inviolable for you. Here, perhaps, they might penetrate to you; but come to the end of the chamber from which you took the key, there is a last room enclosed with walls and without issue. I will shut you in, you will have nothing to fear."

"Alone! oh, no! alone I should be afraid."

"Child, you cannot, however, accompany me! It is from the king that I fear anything; well, since it is to him I go——"

"It's true," said Aïssa, "yes, madame—well, I resign myself, I will wait—not in that dark and secluded chamber, oh! no, but here, on the cushions on which you have reposed, there all will remind me of your presence and your protection."

"You must, however, repose."

"I have no need of it, madame."

"As you like, Aïssa; pass the time of my absence in supplicating your God to make me triumph, for then, to-morrow, at daybreak, and without apprehensions, you shall take the road that leads to Rianzarès; to-morrow, you may, on quitting me, say to yourself, 'I go to my husband, and on earth no power shall be strong enough to separate me from him.'"

"Thanks, madame, thanks!" exclaimed the young girl, covering with kisses the hands of her generous friend. "Oh! yes, yes, I will pray, oh! yes, God will listen to me."

At the moment the two young women exchanged this tender adieu, might have been seen, at the extremity of the patio, mounting by degrees the branches of the orange trees, a curious head, that placed itself on a level with the gallery, in the thickest of the shade. This head, hidden amongst the leaves, remained motionless.

Donna Maria quitted the young girl, and stepped lightly towards the gallery of the secret door.



The head without moving, regarded with its large white eyes Donna Maria, saw her enter the mysterious corridor, and listened. In fact, the noise of a door creaking on its rusty hinges was heard at the other extremity of the corridor, and immediately the head disappeared from the middle of the tree, like that of a serpent that hastily slides down. It was the Saracen, Hafiz, who thus glided down the polished trunk of the citrons. At the foot he found another sombre figure who awaited him.

"How now, Hafiz! you descend already?" said this individual to him.

"Yes, master, for I have nothing more to see in the apartment, Donna Maria has just left it."

"Where is she gone?"

"To the end of the gallery, on the right, and there she disappeared."

"Disappeared! Oh! by the holy name of the prophet, she has taken the secret door and goes to speak with the king; we are lost!"

"You know that I am at your orders, Seigneur Mothril," said Hafiz, turning pale.

"Good, follow me towards the royal apartments; all are asleep at this hour. There are neither guards nor courtiers. You shall mount by the patio of the king as far as his window, as you have just done, and you shall listen there as you have here."

"There is a more simple method, Seigneur Mothril, and you may listen yourself."

"Which?—make haste, by the prophet!"

"Follow me, then. I shall mount a column of the patio, I shall arrive at a window, I shall there introduce myself, and glide to a back door which I will open to you. By these means, you may listen at your ease to all that Don Pedro and Maria de Padilla say, or are saying at this moment."

"You are right, Hafiz, and the prophet inspires you; I will do as you say. Show me the way."

CHAPTER LVII.

EXPLANATION.

DONNA MARIA had not deceived herself, the danger was extreme.

Weary of a possession of many years, surfeited with success, and corrupted by adversity, which purifies good natures that have strayed, Don Pedro felt the need of stimulants for evil, but in no way counsel for good. It was necessary to change the dispositions of this mind, and nothing would have been impossible with love; but it was feared that Don Pedro had no longer any for Maria.

She entered, then, blindly the road so well lighted for Mothril her enemy; no doubt, if she had encountered the Moor on her way, and had held a poignard, she would have struck without pity, for she felt that his cursed influence weighed down her life for a year past, and began to rule it. Maria thought all this when she opened the secret door and found herself in the apartment of the king.

Don Pedro, terrified, uncertain, wandered like a spectre in the gallery. The silence of Donna Maria, her calm rage, gave him the strongest apprehensions, and the most dangerous anger:

"I am braved," he said, "even in my very court; they show me that I am not the master, and really I am not so, since the arrival of a woman deranges all my projects, and destroys the hope of all my pleasures. 'Tis a yoke that I must break; if I am not strong enough to act alone, they will assist me."

He was saying these words when Maria, who had glided like a fairy on the polished flag stones, arrested him by the arm, and said:—"Who will aid you, senor?"

"Donna Maria!" exclaimed the king, as though he had seen a spectre.

"Yes, Donna Maria, who comes to demand of you, of you, the king, in what the advice, the yoke if you will, of a noble Spaniard, of a woman who loves you, is more dishonouring and more burdensome, than the yoke imposed on Don Pedro by Mothril, on a christian king by a Moor?"

Don Pedro contracted his hands with rage.

"No impatience," said Donna Maria; "no passion, 'tis neither the hour nor the place. You are here in your palace, and I, your subject, am not come to dictate my pleasure to you. Thus, master as you are, senor, do not take the trouble to irritate yourself; the lion does not quarrel with the ant."

Don Pedro was not accustomed to these humble protestations of his mistress. He stopped, confounded:—"What is your desire, then, madame?" he said.

"But little, senor; you love, it appears, another woman, you have the right; I shall not examine whether you make a good or a bad use of it—'tis your right. I am not your wife, and were I so, I should remember what, on my account, you have inflicted, in griefs and tortures, on those who were your wives."

"Do you reproach me with it?" proudly said Don Pedro, who sought an occasion to get irritated.

Donna Maria sustained his look with firmness:—"I am not God," she said, "to reproach the crimes of kings! I am a woman, alive to-day, dead to-morrow, an atom, a breath, a naught; but I have a voice, and I use it, to tell you what you

will hear from none but me. You love, King Don Pedro, and every time this has happened to you, a cloud has passed before your eyes, and has hid the universe from you. But—you turn your head—what do you hear? what preoccupies you?"

"I fancied I heard," said Don Pedro, "some steps in the adjoining chamber—no! 'tis impossible."

"Why impossible? all is possible here—look, sire, I beg—they are listening to us!"

"No! there is no door to that room, and I have no attendants near me. 'Tis the evening breeze that has raised the screen, and makes the flap of the window beat."

"I was saying to you," continued Donna Maria, "that as you love me no longer, I have taken the resolution to retire."

Don Pedro made a movement.

"This renders you happy, I am glad of it," said Donna Maria, coldly—"I do it for that. I shall retire, then, and you will not again hear me mentioned. From this moment, senor, you have no longer for a mistress Donna Maria de Padilla, 'tis an humble servant, who will speak to you the truth as to your position. You have gained a battle, but they will tell you that others have gained it for you; your ally, in such a case, is your master, and will prove it you sooner or later. Already, even, the Prince of Wales demands considerable sums that are due to him; this money—you have it not; the twelve thousand lances that have fought for you, will turn against you. The prince, however, your brother, has found assistance in France, and the constable, cherished by everything that bears a French name, will return with the thirst for revenge. These are two armies you will have to fight. What will you oppose to them?—an army of Saracens. Oh! christian king! you have but one means of re-entering the confederation of the princes of the church, and you deprive yourself of these means. You would draw upon yourself, besides temporal weapons, the rage of the Pope and excommunication! Reflect upon it, the Spaniards are religious, they will abandon you, already even the vicinity of the Moors terrifies and disgusts them. This is not all—the man who drives you to your ruin does not find it complete in misery and degradation, that is, in exile and defeat; he would impose upon you an infamous alliance, he would make of you a renegade. God hears me; I do not hate, I love Aïssa, I protect her, I defend her, as a sister, for I know her heart, and I know her life. Aïssa, were she the daughter of a Saracen king, which she is not, senor, and I will prove it, is not more worthy of being your wife than I, the daughter of the ancient knights of Castile, I, the noble heiress of twenty ancestors, each worth a christian king; and yet, never have I demanded of you to consecrate our love by a marriage! Certainly, I could have done so; certainly, King Don Pedro, you had loved me!"

Don Pedro sighed.

"This is not all, Mothril talks to you of the love of Aïssa; what am I saying? He promises it to you, perhaps?"

Don Pedro looked uneasy, and greatly interested, as if to seize, before they were uttered, the words of Maria.

"He promises that she will love you, does he not?"

"Suppose it were so, madame."

"It might be, sire, and you merit more than love; there are certain persons of your kingdom,

and those persons are the equals of Aïssa, I think, who have for you more than adoration."

The brow of Don Pedro became clearer; Donna Maria made to vibrate every sensible chord of his soul.

"But still," continued the young woman, "Donna Aïssa will not love you, because she loves another."

"Is that true?" exclaimed Don Pedro with fury. "Is it not a calumny?"

"So little of a calumny, seigneur, that if you at once question Aïssa, if you question her before she can communicate with me, she will tell you word for word what I am about to say to you."

"Speak, madame, speak; by so doing you will render me a real service. Aïssa loves some one? Who does she love?"

"A French knight, named Agénor de Mauléon."

"The ambassador who was sent to me at Soria? And Mothril knows it?"

"He knows it."

"You affirm it?"

"I swear it!"

"And her heart is so fixed, that to promise me her love has been, on the part of Mothril, a shameful lie, an odious treason?"

"A shameful lie, an odious treason."

"You will prove it, senora?"

"The moment you order it, seigneur."

"Repeat it to me, that I may persuade myself of its truth."

Donna Maria felt her superiority over the king. She held him by jealousy and by pride.

"By the living God," said Aïssa to me but now, and her words still echo in my ears, 'I swear to you, that in case Don Pedro held me in his power and forced his love upon me, I swear to you that I should have a poignard to pierce my heart, or a ring like yours to inhale a mortal poison,' and she indicated to me this ring I have on my finger, senor."

"That ring?" said Don Pedro, terrified. "What has that ring, then, senora?"

"It encloses, in fact, a subtle poison, senor. I have worn it for two years to secure my liberty of body and soul in the event of my one day, in the evil chances of your fortune that I have so faithfully followed, encountering one who would deliver me to your enemies."

Don Pedro felt something like remorse in the presence of this heroism, so simple and so touching. "You are," he said, "a noble heart, Maria, and I have never loved a woman as I have loved you; but evil chances are far off—you may live!"

"As he has loved me!" thought Maria, turning pale, but without betraying herself. "He no longer says as he loves me!"

"And this is Aïssa's thought?" said Don Pedro, after a silence.

"Entirely, senor."

"'Tis an idolatry for this French knight."

"'Tis a love equal to that I have had for you," replied Donna Maria.

"That you have had?" said Don Pedro, more feeble than his mistress, and showing his wound at the first touch of the lance

"Yes! seigneur."

Don Pedro knit his brows:—"May I question Aïssa."

"When it pleases you."

"Will she speak before Mothril?"

"Before Mothril, yes! seigneur."

"She will mention all the details of her love?"

"She will avow even that which makes the shame of a woman."

"Maria!" exclaimed Don Pedro, with a terrible burst, "Maria, what have you said?"

"The truth, always," she replied simply.

"Aïssa dishonoured!"

"Aïssa, whom they would seat upon your throne, and place in your bed, is affianced to the Seigneur de Mauléon by ties which God alone can now break, for they are the ties of a marriage accomplished."

"Maria! Maria!" said the king, giving way to his fury.

"I owed you this last avowal. 'Twas I, who, solicited by her to introduce the Frenchman into the chamber in which Mothril kept her confined, I, who, protecting their loves, was to unite them on the soil of France."

"Mothril! Mothril! every punishment will be too lenient, every torture too mild, to make you expiate this base attempt. Bring Aïssa to me, madam, I beg."

"Seigneur, I go; but reflect, I entreat you; I have betrayed the secret of this young girl, to serve the interest—the honour of my king. Would it not be better that you rely upon my word? Can you not believe me without this proof, which deprives of honour the young child?"

"Ah! you hesitate; you are deceiving me?"

"Seigneur, I do not hesitate, I seek to render a little more confidence to your majesty; this proof we shall have in a few days without *eclat*, without a scandal, that will ruin this young girl."

"This proof I will have at once, and I call upon you to furnish it to me, under the penalty of not being believed in your accusations."

"Seigneur, I obey," said Maria, grievously affected.

"I attend you very impatiently, madam."

"Seigneur, you shall be obeyed."

"If you have spoken the truth, Donna Maria, to-morrow there shall be no longer in Spain a single Moor, who is not either proscribed or fugitive."

"Then to-morrow, seigneur, you will be a great king; and I, a poor fugitive, a poor abandoned mistress, will return thanks to God for the greatest happiness he has accorded me in this world; the certainty of your prosperity."

"Senora, you are pale, you stagger, would you wish me to call?"

"Call no one, sire—no, I will return to my chamber. I have ordered wine; I have prepared a refreshment which waits for me on the table; I am burning, but when once I have quenched my thirst, I shall be quite myself; think no further about me, I beg. But I swear to you," said Maria, suddenly, rushing towards the adjoining room, "I swear there was some one there; this time I heard, and I am not deceived, the step of a man."

Don Pedro took a light, Maria another, and both hastened to the room; it was deserted, nothing announced that any one had entered it; but a door-screen still trembled at the exterior door mentioned by Hafiz.

"No one," said Maria, surprised, "I plainly heard, however."

"I told you so; it was impossible. Oh! Mothril! Mothril! what vengeance I will take for your treason! You will return, then, madam?"

"Merely time to apprise Aïssa and to follow the secret passage." Having thus spoken, Donna Maria took leave of the king, who, in his feverish

impatience, almost confounded the acknowledgment of the service rendered, with the remembrance of former love. In fact, Maria was indeed a handsome and desirable woman; a woman not to be forgotten when once seen. Proud and audacious, she imposed respect, she conquered love. More than once, this despotic king trembled to see her when irritated; oftener still, this surfeited heart palpitated in expectation of her coming.

Thus, when she departed, after having given this explanation, Don Pedro had ran after her to say to her:—"Of what importance is Aïssa? What matters the little basenesses they hatch in the dark? You are the one I love, you are the fruit my thirst so ardently desires." But Donna Maria had closed the iron door, and the king heard nothing but the rustling of her robe against the walls, and the cracking of the dry branches that gave way beneath her step.

CHAPTER LVIII.

MARIA'S RING AND AÏSSA'S POIGNARD.

MOTHRIL'S foot had lightly grazed the floor when Donna Maria thought she heard some one moving in the room. Mothril had taken off his sandals to get as far as the tapestry, to hear what was hatching against him; the revelation of Aïssa's secret had pierced him with fear and horror. That Donna Maria hated him he did not doubt; that she sought to ruin him by questioning his policy, and unmasking his ambition, the Moor was certain; but what he could not support was the idea that Don Pedro became indifferent towards Aïssa.

Aïssa affianced to Mauléon, Aïssa stripped of her spotless purity, became for Don Pedro an object without charm and without value; and no longer to hold Don Pedro by Aïssa's love, was to lose the tie that bound an untamed courser. A few moments more, and all this scaffolding, so painfully erected, would crumble to pieces. Aïssa, sure of being protected, would come with her companion to reveal to Don Pedro the whole secret. Donna Maria would then resume her rights, and Aïssa would lose hers; and Mothril, humbled, cursed, and driven away, illtreated as a miserable forger, would, with his companions, take the funereal road to exile, supposing that he was not on the instant sent to the tomb by the tempest of royal fury. Such were the prospects unfolded to the Moor, whilst Maria conversed with Don Pedro, and during which her words fell one by one like drops of molten lead on the living wound of this ambitious man. Breathless, bewildered, now burning like the stormy surf, now cold as marble, Mothril asked himself why, his hand on a faithful poignard, he did not kill the master who listened, and the revelator who spoke; why, indeed, he did not save his life and his cause? If Don Pedro had had near him another guardian angel than Maria, this angel would not have failed to apprise him at this moment that he was exposed to a terrible danger.

Suddenly the features of Mothril cleared up, the sweat fell less abundantly, less clammy. Two words of Maria had indicated to him a way of security, as also the idea of a crime. He left her, therefore, to finish tranquilly; she might tell her whole thoughts to Don Pedro, and it was only at the last words of the conversation, when he had no longer anything to learn, that he left his hiding place and the screen trembled behind him,

as Don Pedro and Maria had remarked. Mothril, once outside, stopped for a few seconds, and said:—"By the secret passage she will take thrice the time that I shall take to enter the chamber." "Hafiz," he said, touching the shoulder of the young tiger, who watched his every movement, "run to the passage & the gallery, stop Donna Maria when she presents herself, ask pardon of her as though repentance had overtaken you, accuse me, if you like—confess, reveal, do anything you like, but retain her five minutes before she enters the gallery."

"Good! master," said Hafiz. And, climbing like a lizard on the wooden column of the patio, he entered the passage, in which was already heard the steps of Donna Maria, who approached.

In the meantime, Mothril made the tour of the garden, mounted the staircase of the gallery, and entered the apartment of Donna Maria. In one hand he grasped his poignard, in the other he held a small gold flask which he had just taken from one of the folds of his wide belt. When he entered, the wax light, half consumed, ran in large flakes into the candlestick. Aïssa, her eyes closed, was tranquilly asleep on the cushions; from her half-opened lips exhaled, with the perfume of her breath, a cherished name. "Her first," said the Moor, with a sombre regard; dead, she will not avow what Donna Maria would make her say. Oh! strike my child! he murmured "my sleeping child, she to whom, perhaps, were I not pressed by fear, the Most High reserves a throne! We will wait, she shall at least die the last—let me still preserve a momentary hope. He directly advanced to the table, took the silver cup, still half full of the drink prepared by Maria herself, and poured into it the whole contents of the gold flask. "Maria," he quietly said, with a frightful smile, "this poison that I fill for you, is not worth that, perhaps, which you carry in your ring, but we, poor Moors, are barbarians; excuse me, if my mixture does not please you, I offer you my poignard. He had scarcely finished, when the supplicating voice of Hafiz reached his ear, with the more animated voice of Donna Maria, delayed in the secret passage. "From pity," said the young monster, "pardon my youth, I knew not what my master made me do."

"I shall see by-and-by," replied Maria, "leave me! I shall make enquiries and examine the evidence they bring me concerning you, the truth you hide from me." Mothril immediately hid himself behind the drapery that masked the window. Placed there, he could see all—hear all; he could rush upon Maria when she wished to quit. Hafiz, dismissed by her, disappeared slowly beneath the dusky gallery. Maria then entered her apartment and contemplated, with an indefinable expression, Aïssa plunged in a profound sleep. "I have profaned in the eyes of a man your sweet secret of love," she said, "I have soiled your dove-like beauty, but the injury I have done you shall be repaired. Poor child, you sleep under my protection—sleep! one minute more I leave you to your cherished dream."

She made a step towards Aïssa, Mothril grasped more firmly his large poignard; but the movement made by Donna Maria drew her near the table, where she saw her silver cup and the vermillion liquid that beckoned her thirsty lips. She took the cup and drank a long draught. The last mouthful was still beneath her palate, when the freezing hand of death already touched her heart. She staggered—her eyes became fixed—she pressed her two hands against her bosom, and imagining,

in this inconceivable suffering, a fresh calamity—a new treason, perhaps, she looked round her with anxiety—with terror, as if to interrogate solitude and sleep, the two silent witnesses of her suffering. The pain burst out in her bosom like a raging fire; Maria became red, her hands contracted—it seemed as if her heart ascended to her throat, and she opened her mouth to utter a cry. Quick as lightning, Mothril prevented this cry by a mortal pressure. Maria in vain struggled in his arms—in vain she bit the fingers of the Saracen, who closed her mouth. Mothril, while he thus restrained the arms and the voice of the unfortunate woman, extinguished the light, and at the same time Maria fell into darkness and death. For a few moments her feet beat the floor with a noise that awakened the young Moresca, her companion. Aïssa rose up, and attempting to walk in the darkness, stumbled over the corpse. She fell into the arms of Mothril, who seized her by the hands and threw her down by the side of Maria, laying open her shoulder by a thrust with his poignard. Inundated with blood, Aïssa fainted. Mothril then drew off the ring which contained the poison. He emptied this poison into the silver goblet, and replaced it on the finger of his victim, then tinging in the blood the poignard which the young Moresca carried at her belt, he deposited it near Maria, in such a manner that her fingers touched it. This horrible drama was accomplished in less time than is necessary for a serpent of the Indies to stifle two gazelles he has intercepted, enjoying the sun in the pastures of the Savannah.

Mothril, that he might entirely accomplish his task, had but to place himself beyond reach of all suspicion. Nothing was easier. He entered the adjoining patio, as if returning from a surveilling excursion. He enquired of the king's attendants if his majesty was in bed. They replied that the king had been seen promenading with a sort of impatience in the secret gallery. Mothril demanded his cushions, ordered a follower to read him a few verses of the Koran, and appeared to abandon himself to a profound sleep.

Hafiz, without having been enabled to consult his master, had understood him, thanks to his instinct; he had mixed with the guards of Don Pedro, with his accustomed gravity. Half-an-hour thus elapsed. The deepest silence reigned throughout the palace. Suddenly a heart-rending, terrible cry, echoed from the extremity of the royal gallery, and the voice of the king uttered these terrifying words:—"Help! Help!"

Every one rushed towards the gallery, the guards with their naked swords, the attendants with the first weapon that fell to hand.

Mothril, rubbing his eyes and stretching himself as though weary with sleep, demanded:—"What's the matter?"

"The king! the king!" replied the eager crowd.

Mothril rose up and hastened behind the others; he saw advancing in the same direction Hafiz, who was also rubbing his eyes, and appeared bewildered with surprise.

Don Pedro was now seen, a light in his hand, on the threshold of the apartment of Donna Maria. He was uttering loud cries, was pale, and from time to time, turning towards the apartment, he redoubled his groans and imprecations.

Mothril cut through the crowd that surrounded, silent and trembling, the half-mad prince. Ten flambeaus threw on the gallery their blood red glare.

"See! see!" cried Don Pedro; "dead! both dead!"

"Dead!" repeated the crowd in a whisper.

"Dead!" said Mothril; "who dead, seigneur?"

"Look, shameless Saracen!" said the king, whose hair stood on end.

The Moor took a torch from the hands of one of the soldiers, he slowly entered the chamber, and recoiled, or feigned to recoil, at sight of the two bodies and the blood that stained the floor. "Donna Maria!" he said; "Donna Aïssa!" he exclaimed; "Allah!"

The crowd tremblingly repeated: "Donna Maria! Donna Aïssa! dead!"

Mothril knelt and contemplated the two victims with a painful attention. The king spoke not a word; Mothril made a sign—every one retired slowly.

"Seigneur," repeated the Moor in the same tone of affectionate insistence, "there has been a crime committed."

"Villain!" exclaimed Don Pedro, coming to himself, "you here, you who have betrayed me!"

"My lord suffers much, since he thus ill-treats his best friends," said Mothril, with unalterable mildness.

"Maria!—Aïssa!" repeated Don Pedro, delirious, "dead!"

"Seigneur, I do not complain," said Mothril.

"Thou! thou complain, wretch! and of what would'st thou complain?"

"Of this, that I see in the hand of Donna Maria the weapon that has shed the illustrious blood of my kings, killed the daughter of my venerated master, the grand caliph."

"It's true," murmured Don Pedro. "The poignard is in the hand of Donna Maria; but herself—her, whose features present so frightful an aspect, whose eye threatens, whose lips foam—she—Donna Maria, who has killed her?"

"How should I know, seigneur—I, who slept, and entered here after you?" And the Saracen, after contemplating the livid visage of Maria, shook his head without speaking; but he curiously examined the cup still half full. "Poison!" he murmured.

The king stooped over the corpse, of which he seized the stiffened hand with a sombre terror. Ah!" exclaimed Don Pedro, "the ring is empty!"

"The ring?" repeated Mothril, feigning surprise, "what ring?"

"Yes," continued the king, "the ring with the mortal poison. Ah! look! Maria has killed herself!" said the king. "Maria, for whom I waited, who might have hoped for my love."

"No seigneur, I think you are deceived; Donna Maria was jealous, and knew for some time past that your heart was filled by another woman. Donna Maria, remember, sire, must have been struck with alarm and mortally wounded in her pride, on seeing approach you Aïssa, whom you called. Her anger passed, she has preferred death to abandonment. Besides, she died not without vengeance, and, for a Spaniard, vengeance is a pleasure more preferable than life."

This discourse was a skilful perfidy; the tone of innocent confidence in which it was pronounced, imposed for a moment on Don Pedro; but on a sudden he was hurried away with grief, by resentment, and exclaimed, seizing the Moor by the throat, "Mothril, you lie! Mothril, you are playing with me! You attribute the death of Donna Maria to regret at my abandonment of her; you do not know then, or you feign not to know, that I preferred to all, Donna Maria, my noble friend."

"Seigneur, you did not say this to me the other day, when you accused Donna Maria of wearying you."

"Tell me not this, cursed man, in presence of this corpse."

"Seigneur, I will chain my tongue, I will take away my life rather than displease my king, but I would calm his grief, and I attempt it like a faithful friend."

"Maria! Aïssa!" said Don Pedro, bewildered. "My kingdom to purchase one hour of your life!"

"God acts in his own wisdom," lugubriously chaunted the Moor. "He has withdrawn from me the joy of my old age, the flower of my life, the pearl of innocence that cheered my house."

Miscreant!" exclaimed Don Pedro, in whom these words, designedly uttered, awakened selfishness and consequently fury; "you still speak of the innocence and candour of Aïssa—you who knew her love for the French knight—you who knew of her dishonour!"

"Me!" replied the Moor, in a stifled voice, "me! I knew of the dishonour of Donna Aïssa? Aïssa was dishonoured? Ah!" he said, in a groan of passion which, although affected, was not the less terrible, "who has said this?"

"Her whom your hatred will no longer prejudice! her who never lied! her whom death has snatched from me!"

"Donna Maria!" said the Saracen with contempt; "she had an interest in saying so—she might well say this from love, since she has died from love; she might well slander from vengeance, since she has killed from vengeance." Don Pedro remained silent and reflecting before this accusation, so logical and so bold. "If Donna Aïssa were not pierced with a poignard," added Mothril, "they would tell you, perhaps, that she had assassinated Donna Maria."

This last argument exceeded the limits of audacity. Don Pedro made use of it to serve himself.

"Why not?" he said; "Donna Maria had revealed to me the secret of your Moresca; might not the latter have revenged herself on the revealer?"

"Pay attention," replied Mothril; "that the ring of Donna Maria is empty. Now who has emptied it, if not herself? King, you are very blind, since you do not see, by the death of these two women, that Donna Maria had deceived you."

"How so? she was to bring me the proof, to bring me Aïssa to repeat the words of Maria!"

"Has she come?"

"She is dead."

"Because, to return, she must prove it, and prove it she could not."

Don Pedro again bent down his head, lost in this terrible obscurity:—"The truth!" murmured Don Pedro, "who will tell me the truth?"

"I tell it you."

"Thou!" exclaimed the king, with redoubled hatred; "thou art a monster who persecuted Donna Maria, who wished me to abandon her; 'tis thou who hast caused her death. Well! thou shalt disappear from my domains, thou shalt take the road to exile, this is the only favour I can grant thee."

"Silence, seigneur! a prodigy!" replied Mothril, without replying to this passionate burst of Don Pedro; "the heart of Donna Aïssa beats underneath my hand; she lives! she lives!"

"She lives!" exclaimed Don Pedro: "you are sure of it?"

"I feel the beating of her heart."

"The wound is not mortal, perhaps—a physician!"

"None among christians," said Mothril, with a sombre authority, "shall place a hand on a noble daughter of my nation; Aïssa will not, perhaps, be saved, but if she is, it shall be by myself alone."

"Save her! Mothril, save her! that she may speak."

Mothril fixed on the king a steady look, "That she may speak?" he said; "seigneur, she shall speak."

"Well! Mothril, then we shall see."

"Yes, seigneur, we shall see whether I am a slanderer, and if Aïssa is dishonoured."

Don Pedro, who was kneeling before the two bodies, now regarded the sinister countenance of Maria, contracted by a hideous death, then the calm and gentle features of Aïssa, who had fallen asleep in her swoon. "Ah!" said he to himself; "Donna Maria was very jealous, and I still remember, that she did not formerly defend Blanche de Bourbon, whom I have murdered for her." He rose up, unwilling longer to contemplate the young girl. "Save her, Mothril!" he said to the Saracen.

"Fear nothing, seigneur, I wish her to live, she will live."

Don Pedro retired, struck with a sort of superstitious terror, and it seemed to him that the spectre of Donna Maria rose from the ground and followed him into the gallery:—"If the young girl be in a state to speak," he said, "bring her to me, or apprise me of it, I would question her." It was his last word. He re-entered his apartment without regret, without love, without hope.

Mothril ordered the doors to be closed; he made Hafiz gather some different balsams, the juice of which he expressed over Aïssa's wound, a wound which his skilful poignard had made with the dexterity of a surgeon's knife. Aïssa came to herself as soon as Mothril had made her inhale some powerful aromatics. She was weak, but her memory returning with her strength, the first use she made of life was to utter a cry of terror. She had perceived the inanimate body of Maria Padilla lying at her feet, her eye still expressing menace and despair.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE PRISON OF THE GOOD CONSTABLE.

DUGUESCLIN had been conducted to Bordeaux, the residence of the Prince of Wales, and he found himself treated with the greatest attention, but, as a prisoner, closely watched. The chateau, in which they had confined him, had a governor and a gaoler. A hundred men-at-arms composed his guard, and allowed no one to penetrate to the constable. At the same time, the most distinguished officers of the English army looked upon it as an honour to pay a visit to the prisoner. John Chandos, the father of Albert, and the principal noblemen of Guiennes, obtained permission to dine and sup frequently with Duguesclin, who, a hospitable host and a merry companion, received them generously, and, that he might treat them well, borrowed money of the Lombards of Bordeaux on his property in Brittany. By degrees the constable lulled the suspicions of the garrison; he appeared pleased with his prison, and announced no desire to be freed from it. When the Prince of Wales visited him and spoke

to him of his ransom, and smiling:—"It will arrive," he said, "monseigneur; patience!"

The prince then confided his troubles to him; Duguesclin, with his usual frankness, reproached him for having placed his genius and his power in the service of so bad a cause as that of Don Pedro. "How," he said, "a knight of your rank and your merit to lower himself to defend this pillager, this assassin, this crowned renegade?"

"A reason of state," replied the prince.

"And a wish to disturb France, eh?" replied the constable.

"Ah! Messire Bertrand, do not make me talk politics," said the prince; and they laughed.

At times, the duchess, wife of the prince, sent to Bertrand refreshments, and presents worked by her own hand, and these kind attentions rendered more supportable to the prisoner his confinement in the fortress. But he had no one near him to whom he could confide his griefs, and these griefs were profound. He saw time sliding away, he felt that this army, raised with so much trouble, was lessening daily, would be more difficult to collect when necessary. He had almost under his eyes the spectacle of the captivity of twelve hundred officers and soldiers, his companions, taken at Navarrete, the nucleus of an invincible troop, who, become free, would collect with ardour the remains of this immense power, crushed in a day of unexpected defeat. Often he thought of the King of France, no doubt greatly embarrassed at this moment. He saw, from the seclusion of his prison, the dear and venerable sire promenading, his head bent down, beneath the arbours of the garden of Saint Paul, now lamenting, now hoping and murmuring, like Augustus:—"Bertrand! render me my legions!" "And, in the meantime," added Duguesclin, in his mental monologues, "France is devoured by the reflux of the companies; the Caverleys, the green knights, like locusts, consume the remains of the poor harvest." Duguesclin then thought of Spain, of the insolent abuses of Don Pedro, of the obscure condition of Henry, for ever hurled from the throne which he had touched with his hand. But now the constable could not prevent himself accusing the unworthy *nonchalance* of this prince, who, instead of ardently pursuing his work, of consecrating to it his fortune, his life, of raising half the christian world against the Spanish infidels attached to Don Pedro, basely begged for his life with some unknown seigneur. When these bitter thoughts invaded the mind of the good constable, the prison appeared odious to him; he regarded the bars of iron as Samson did the fastenings of the gates of Gaza, and he fancied himself strong enough to carry off the walls on his shoulder. But prudence counselled him promptly to put a good countenance on it, and as to his Breton loyalty, Bertrand joined the cunning of the Bas Normand, as he was both crafty and vigorous, the constable never uttered such *eclats* of joy, he never drank so gaily, as in his hours of discouragement and *ennui*. Thus did he turn aside the suspicions of some of the most *rusés* English; a superior authority, however, maintained round the prisoner the most rigorous *surveillance*. Too proud to complain of it, the constable knew not to whom, nor to what, he could attribute this display of severity, which went so far as to stop the arrival of letters that were sent to him from France.

The English court had regarded as one of the happiest results of the victory of Navarrete the capture of Duguesclin. The constable, in fact,

was the only serious obstacle which the English, commanded by a hero, such as the Prince of Wales, could encounter in Spain. King Edward, well advised, determined to extinguish by degrees his power in this country, ravaged by internal wars. He felt certain that Don Pedro, an ally of the Moors, would be sooner or later dethroned; that Don Henry, vanquished or killed, there remained no other pretendants to the throne of Castile, thenceforth an easy prey to the victorious army of the Prince of Wales. But if Bertrand were free, things changed their appearances; he could re-enter Spain, reconquer the advantage lost at Navarrete, drive out the English and Don Pedro, install for good Don Henry de Transtamara, and overthrow the plan of domination which for five years, preoccupied the councils of the King of England. Edward judged men less knightly than his son; he imagined that the constable might escape; that if he did not escape, he might be carried off; that even a prisoner, confined, powerless, between four walls, he might give some good advice, a good project of evasion, or a hope to the vanquished party. Thus had Edward placed over the constable two incorruptible *surveillants*, the governor and the gaoler, both of whom looked to no other authority than that direct from the grand council of England. Edward did not communicate to the Prince of Wales, so eminently noble and royal, the reservations of his councillors; he feared that this prince would place some obstacle to them by a magnanimous resistance. The fact is, that the English monarch would not, at any price, restore the prisoner for any ransom, and hoped, by gaining time, to withdraw him from the hands of the Prince of Wales, have him conducted to London, where the Tower appeared to him, for such a treasure, a more faithful depository than the castle of Bordeaux. Certainly, the Prince of Wales, if he had been advised of this determination, would have set Duguesclin at liberty, without waiting for the official order. Thus did they await in London for the affairs of Spain to be arranged, for Don Pedro to be apparently consolidated on the throne, that France should be kept rigorously in check, to be enabled by a sudden *coup-d'état*, by an order of the supreme council, to recall the prince to London with his prisoner. Now the English monarch awaited the favourable moment. Duguesclin himself felt not the storm. He lived in confidence under the hand which he found all-powerful—of his conqueror of Navarrete. The day so anxiously desired by the illustrious prisoner at length shined through the bars of his chamber—the Sire de Laval arrived at Bordeaux with the ransom. This noble Breton sent to inform the Prince of Wales of his intentions and his mission. It was mid-day. The sun descended obliquely into the apartment of the constable, who, at this moment alone, sorrowfully regarded the rays disappear from the naked wall. The trumpets sounded, the drums beat; Bertrand understood that an illustrious visitor had arrived. The Prince of Wales entered his room uncovered, with a smiling face:—"Well! Sire Constable," he said, whilst Duguesclin saluted him with one knee on the ground, "did you not wish for sunshine?—it is fair this morning!"

"The fact is, monseigneur," replied Duguesclin, "that I should prefer the song of the nightingales of my own country to the little cries of the Bordeaux mice; but to what the Almighty does, man has nothing to object."

"Quite the contrary, Sire Constable; some-

times God proposes, and man disposes. Do you know the news from your country?"

"No, monseigneur," said Bertrand, in a voice of emotion, so much of anguish and pleasure did this beloved name raise in his heart.

"Well, Sire Constable, you will be free, the ransom is arrived." Having thus spoken, the prince tendered his hand to the astonished Bertrand, and quitted him with a smile. At the door:—"Messire Governor," he said to the officer charged with the safe keeping of the prisoner, "you will permit, if you please, to approach the constable, the friend and money which arrive to him from France." Having said this, the prince left the castle.

The governor, gloomy and silent, remained alone with the constable. This unexpected arrival of Laval destroyed all the plans of the English council, and Duguesclin would be free, despite all. Without an express order from King Edward, the governor could offer no opposition to the will of the Prince of Wales, and this order had not arrived. The governor, however, knew the inmost thoughts of the council of England; he knew that the freedom of the constable would be a source of misfortune for his country, and a grief for King Edward. He therefore resolved to attempt to do by himself, that which the government had been as yet unable to do, so rapid had been the expedition of Mauléon, so enthusiastic had been the eagerness of the Bretons to liberate their hero. The governor then, instead of giving orders to the gaoler, as the Prince of Wales had commanded him, went to keep the prisoner company. "You are at length free, then, Sire Constable," he said, "and it will be a real misfortune for us to lose you."

Duguesclin smiled:—"Why so?" he said with an air of raillery.

"'Tis so great an honour, Messire Bertrand, for a poor simple knight, such as I am, to guard so powerful a warrior as you!"

"Good!" said the constable, with his usual gaiety, "I am one of those who are always captured in battle. The prince will again make me a prisoner, 'tis infallible, and then you shall guard me again; for, I swear, you guard me well."

The governor sighed. "There remains to me one consolation," he said.

"Where?"

"I have under guard all your companions, twelve hundred Bretons, prisoners like yourself; I shall talk with them about you."

Duguesclin felt his joy abandon him at the idea that his friends would remain prisoners, whilst he, escaping from slavery, again beheld his country's sun.

"These worthy companions," added the governor, "will be grieved to see you depart; but, by my good offices, I shall diminish the *ennui* of their captivity."

Another sigh from Bertrand, who, this time, began to perambulate in silence the paved floor of his chamber.

"Oh!" continued the governor, "the grand prerogative of genius and of valour; one man, by his merit, is worth twelve hundred men at once!"

"How so?" said Bertrand.

"I mean, messire, that the sum brought by the Sire de Laval to liberate you, would suffice to pay the ransom of your twelve hundred companions."

"That is true," murmured the constable, more thoughtful, more gloomy than ever.

"'Tis the first time," continued the Englishman "that it has been visibly demonstrated to me that one man is worth an army; in fact, your twelve hundred Bretons, Seigneur Constable, are a real army, and would make a campaign by themselves alone. By Saint George! messire, were I in your place, and rich as you are, I would not leave this but as an illustrious captain, with my twelve hundred soldiers!"

"This is a brave man," said Duguesclin to himself, thoughtfully, he points me out my duty. In fact, it is not right that a man, made of flesh and blood like others, should cost his country as much as twelve hundred honest and valiant christians.

The governor followed with an attentive eye, the progress of his insinuation.

"Oh!" said Bertrand, suddenly, "you think that the Bretons will not cost more than seventy thousand florins for their ransom?"

"I am certain of it, Sire Constable."

"And that the sum being paid, the prince will free them?"

"Without a haggle."

"You will guarantee it?"

"On my honour and my life," said the governor, trembling with joy.

"Very well! introduce here, I beg you, the Sire de Laval, my countryman and friend. Send up also my scribe with everything requisite to draw out a memorandum in proper form."

The governor lost no time, he was so happy, that he forgot that his orders were to allow no one to penetrate to the prisoner but English and Navarrese, his natural enemies. He transmitted to the astonished gaoler Bertrand's orders; and ran himself to apprise the Prince of Wales.

CHAPTER LX.

THE RANSOM.

BORDEAUX was filled with tumult and agitation, caused by the arrival of the Sire de Laval, with his four mules loaded with gold, and the fifty men-at-arms bearing the banners of France and of Brittany. A considerable crowd had followed the imposing *cortège*, and on every face was read either uneasiness and vexation, if it concerned an Englishman, or joy and triumph, if the face belonged to a Gascon or a Frenchman. The Sire de Laval received, in his passage, the congratulations of some, the sullen imprecations of others; but his countenance was calm and impassable. After the trumpeters he headed the *cortège*, one hand on his poignard, the other on the bridle of his powerful black horse, and his visor raised; he pushed through the anxious crowd, without pressing or relaxing before any obstacle the pace of his war-horse. He arrived before the chateau in which Duguesclin was a prisoner, dismounted, gave his horse to the squires, and ordered the four muleteers to take off the coffers that contained the *specie*. The men obeyed.

Whilst they lifted, one after another, the four weighty chests, and the curious eagerly pressed round the escort, a knight, with his visor down, without colours or device, approached the Sire de Laval, and said to him, in pure French:—"Messire, you will have the happiness to see the illustrious prisoner, the still greater pleasure of restoring him to liberty; you will then bring him amidst the brave soldiers who follow you; I, who am one of the best friends of the constable, may not perhaps have an opportunity of speaking to

him; will it please you to allow me to mount with you to the *donjon*?"

"Sire Chevalier," said M. de Laval, "your voice sounds sweet in my ear, you speak the language of my country, but I do not know you, and if they ask me your name, I must tell a falsehood."

"You will reply," said the stranger, "that I am the Bastard of Mauléon."

"But you are not," said Laval, quickly, "since the Sire de Mauléon has left us to arrive more quickly in Spain."

"I come on his part, messire, do not refuse me, I have one word only to say to the constable, only one —"

"Tell me this word then, I will transmit it to him."

"I can only tell it to himself, and besides he will not understand it unless I show him my face. I entreat you, Sire de Laval, do not refuse me, in the name of the honour of the French arms, of which I swear to you, before God, I am one of the most zealous defenders."

"I believe you, messire," said the count, "but you show me but little confidence, knowing who I am," he added, with a feeling of wounded pride.

"When you know who I am myself, Sire Count, you will not hold such language. Three days have I now passed in Bordeaux, endeavouring to penetrate to the constable, and neither gold nor cunning has succeeded."

"To me you appear very suspicious," replied the Count de Laval, "and I will not charge my conscience with a lie on your account. Besides, what interest have you to mount to the constable, who will leave in ten minutes? In ten minutes, in fact, he will be here, where you are, and you will speak to him this important word."

The stranger moved impatiently; "In the first place," he said, "I am not of your opinion, and I do not look upon the constable as free. Something tells me that his liberation from prison will encounter more difficulties than you suppose; besides, in admitting that he will be free in ten minutes, count, I shall still have gained this time upon the road I shall take; I shall have escaped all the delays of ceremony, of the setting at liberty; a visit to the prince; thanks to the governor; farewell feast. I entreat you, take me with you, I may be useful to you."

The stranger was interrupted at this moment by the gaoler, who appeared in the archway to invite the Sire de Laval to enter the *donjon*. The count took leave of his importunate companion with an abrupt authority. The stranger knight, who seemed to tremble under his armour, retired along the pillars behind the men-at-arms, and waited, as if he still hoped for the last coffer to disappear on its road to the *donjon*.

Whilst the Sire de Laval mounted the stairs, was seen to pass by an open gallery, which joined the two wings of the castle, the Prince of Wales, preceded by the governor, and followed by Chandos and some officers; the conqueror of Navarrete went to pay his last visit to Duguesclin.

All the people shouted *Noe!* and *Long live Saint George*, for the Prince of Wales. The French trumpets sounded in honour of the hero, who courteously saluted them. The doors were then closed, and the crowd, growing closer by degrees, awaited with noisy murmurs the egress of the constable.

The hearts of the Breton soldiers beat violently; they were about to see their great captain, whose liberty they would all have purchased with their

lives. Half-an-hour, however, passed; the patience of those present began to turn to uneasiness, in the minds of the Bretons. The stranger knight tore his right gauntlet with his left one.

Chandos again appeared in the open gallery, talking earnestly with the officers, who appeared amazed and stupified with surprise.

When the door of the castle again opened, instead of giving passage to the liberated hero, there appeared the Sire de Laval, pale, defeated, trembling with emotion, who searched eagerly amongst the crowd.

Several Breton officers rushed towards him. "What's the matter, then?" they enquired anxiously.

"Oh! a great disaster—a strange event!" replied the count. "But where, then, is that stranger—that prophet of misfortune?"

"I am here," said the mysterious knight; "I am here—I awaited you."

"Do you still desire to see the constable?"

"More than ever."

"Well, hasten, then, for in ten minutes it will be too late. Come! come! He is more a prisoner than ever."

"We shall see," replied the stranger, nimbly mounting the stairs behind the count, who drew him after him.

The gaoler opened the door to them with a smile, and the assembled crowd commenced, in a thousand different tones, to comment on the event that delayed the liberation of the constable.

"There!" said quietly the chief of the Bretons to his soldiers, the hand on the sword, and attention.

CHAPTER LXI.

HOW, INSTEAD OF RESTORING A PRISONER, THE GOVERNOR LIBERATED A WHOLE ARMY.

THE Englishman was not deceived, he knew his prisoner. Scarcely had the Sire de Laval received the order to enter the chateau—scarcely had he thrown himself into the arms of the constable—scarcely, in fact, had the first moment of joy passed, than the constable, contemplating the coffers brought by the muleteers to the landing of the chamber:—"What money!" he said, "my dear friend."

"Never was a tax more easily raised," replied the Sire de Laval, who, proud of his countryman, knew not how to show him his respect and his friendship."

"They are my brave Bretons," said the constable, "and you have been the first to despoil yourself."

"You should have seen the pieces showered into the bags of the collectors," exclaimed the Sire de Laval, delighted to annoy, by this enthusiasm, the English governor, who had returned from his visit to the prince, and was tranquilly listening.

"Seventy thousand gold florins! what a sum," again repeated the constable.

"What a sum when it concerns the collecting it; small, when it is collected, and about to be paid."

"My friend," interrupted Duguesclin "sit down, I beg you; you know that there are here twelve hundred countrymen, prisoners like myself."

"Alas, yes, I know it."

"Well! I have found the means of setting them

free. It was my fault that they were taken, to-day I will repair my fault."

"How so?" said the Sire de Laval, astonished.

"Have you had the kindness, Messire Governor, to bring up the scribe?"

"He is at the door, Sire Constable," said the Englishman, "and he attends your orders."

"Let him enter." The governor struck three times with his foot, the gaoler introduced the scribe, who, no doubt apprized, brought with him parchment, pens, ink, and five long meagre fingers. "Write what I am about to dictate to you, my friend," said the constable.

"I attend, monseigneur."

"I dictate:—'We, Bertrand Duguesclin, Constable of France and Castile, Count of Soria, make known by these presents, that our repentance is great, at having, in a day of overgrown pride, estimated our personal value at the price of twelve hundred good christians and brave knights, who are certainly worth more than us.' Here the good constable stopped, without studying on the different physiognomies, the effect of his preamble. The scribe wrote faithfully. 'We humbly demand pardon of God and our brothers,' continued Duguesclin, 'and to repair our folly, we consecrate the sum of seventy thousand florins to the redemption of twelve hundred prisoners made by his highness the Prince of Wales at Navarrete, of fatal memory.'"

"You engage your lands!" exclaimed the Sire de Laval; "'tis an unworthy abuse of generosity, Seigneur Constable."

"No, my friend, my funds are already dissipated, and I cannot reduce Madame Tiphaine to poverty, she has suffered but too much already on my account."

"What will you do, then?"

"The money you bring me is undoubtedly mine?"

"Assuredly; but——"

"That is sufficient—if it is mine, I dispose of it at my pleasure. Write, Messire the Scribe:—'I charge with this ransom the seventy thousand florins brought me by the Sire de Laval——'"

"But, Seigneur Constable," exclaimed Laval, thunderstruck; "you will remain a prisoner——"

"And covered with immortal glory," interrupted the governor.

"This is impossible," continued Laval; "reflect upon it."

"You have written," said the constable to the scribe.

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Give it me, then, that I may sign;" the constable took the pen and signed rapidly. At this moment the trumpets announced the arrival of the Prince of Wales. Already had the governor seized the parchment.

When the Sire de Laval perceived the English prince, he ran to him, and bending his knee:—"Seigneur," he said; "here is the money demanded for the ransom of M. the Constable, do you accept it?"

"According to my word, and willingly," said the prince.

"This money is yours, monseigneur, take it," said the count.

"A moment," said the governor; "your highness is not informed of the incident that has taken place; will you be good enough to read this parchment."

"To annul it!" exclaimed De Laval.

"To have it put in execution," said the constable.

The prince glanced at the writing, and, struck with admiration:—"Tis a noble action," he said; "and would that I had done it."

"It would have been useless to you, monseigneur," observed Duguesclin; "you who were the conqueror."

"Your highness will not retain the constable!" exclaimed Laval.

"No! certainly, if he wishes to leave," said the prince.

"But I wish to remain, Laval, I ought to; ask these seigneurs what they think of it."

Chandos, Albert, and the others, loudly expressed their admiration.

"Well!" said the prince, "let them count the money, and you, messieurs, set at liberty the Breton prisoners."

It was now that the English officers went out; it was now that Laval, half mad with grief, remembered the sinister augury of the strange knight, and ran out of the chateau to call him to his aid. Already, in the castle, an officer called over the names of the prisoners, already were the coffers empty, the gold piled up in heaps, when Laval returned with the stranger. "Now, say to the constable what you have to say to him," murmured Laval in the ear of the knight, whilst the prince conversed familiarly with Duguesclin; "and, since you have such power, magic or natural, persuade him to take for himself the ransom money, instead of giving it to the others."

The stranger started. He made a step or two in advance, and his golden spurs echoed on the flag stones. The prince turned round at the sound.

"Who is this knight?" demanded the governor.

"One of my companions," said Laval.

"Let him raise his visor then, and be welcome," interrupted the prince.

"Seigneur," said the stranger, in a voice that made Duguesclin start in his turn, "I have made a vow to preserve my face covered; permit me to accomplish it."

"Be it it so, seigneur knight; but you do not mean to remain a stranger to the constable?"

"For him as for all, seigneur."

"In that case," exclaimed the governor, "you will have to leave the castle, into which I have orders to allow no one to enter but persons who are known to me." The chevalier bowed, as if to show that he was ready to obey.

"The prisoners are free," said Chandos, entering the hall.

"Adieu, Laval, adieu!" exclaimed the constable, with a heavy heart, which did not escape the sire, for he seized the hands of Bertrand, saying:—"For God's sake! it is still time, desist."

"No! on my life, no!" replied the constable.

"Do you interfere with his honour to this point?" said the governor; "if he is not free to-day, in a month he may be so; money is plentiful, opportunities of glory like this are not met with twice." The prince seemed to applaud, his captains imitated him.

The strange knight immediately advanced gravely towards the governor, and in a majestic voice:—"Tis yourself, Sire Governor, who sullies the honour of your master, by allowing him to do what he does."

"What say you, messire?" exclaimed the governor, turning pale; "you insult me; I tarnish the honour of monseigneur? By the death, you have lied!"

"Throw not your gauntlet without knowing if it is worthy my picking up, messire; I speak aloud and the truth; his highness the Prince of Wales acts against his glory by retaining Duguesclin in this chateau."

"You lie! you lie!" cried the irritated voices, at the same time that the swords leaped from their scabbards.

The prince was pale like the others, so rude and unjust did the attack appear:—"Who then," he said, "dictates to me here? Is it a king, by chance, to talk thus to a king's son? The constable can pay his ransom and leave. If he does not pay, he remains, that's all—why these hostile complaints?"

The strange knight appeared not in the least disconcerted. "Monseigneur," he added; "this is what I have heard along my road:—'They will give the ransom for the constable, but the English fear him too much to set him at liberty.'"

"Holy God! they say this?" murmured the prince.

"Everywhere, monseigneur."

"You see that they are wrong, since the constable is free to depart. Is it not true, constable?"

"It's true, monseigneur," replied Bertrand, whom a strange, inexpressible emotion agitated for some moments.

"But," said the governor, "as the Sire Constable has disposed of the sum destined for his ransom, he must wait for a similar sum to arrive."

The prince remained thoughtful for an instant:—"No!" he said, at length, "the constable shall not wait—I fix his ransom at a hundred livres."

A murmur of admiration circulated throughout the assembly.

Bertrand was on the point of exclaiming, but the strange knight placed himself between him and the prince:—"Thank God!" he said, arresting his hand, France can pay twice for her constable; Duguesclin must be under an obligation to no one; in this *rouleau* are bills on the Lombard Agosti of Bordeaux; they amount to eighty thousand florins, payable at sight; I will myself count the sum, which shall be here within two hours."

"And I," interrupted the prince, in a rage, "tell you that the constable shall quit the castle on paying a hundred livres, or he shall not quit at all! If Messire Bertrand thinks it an insult to be my friend, let him say so! I remember, however, that he one day declared I was as good a knight as himself."

"Oh! monseigneur," exclaimed the constable, kneeling before the Prince of Wales, "I accept with so much gratitude, that to pay the hundred livres, I will borrow of the captains."

Chandos and the other officers eagerly offered him their purses; he then carried the hundred livres to the prince, who embraced him, saying:—"You are free, Messire Bertrand. Let the doors be opened, and let it be no longer said that the Prince of Wales fears any one in the world."

The governor, bewildered, had the order repeated to him; the unlucky man had so badly played, that instead of one solitary prisoner, he lost a whole army with the captain.

Whilst the prince questioned his officers and Laval himself, respecting the mysterious author of this *coup d'état*, the stranger approached Duguesclin, and said to him quietly:—"A false generosity kept you a prisoner, a false generosity liberates you. You are now free; adieu, we meet again this day fortnight in Toledo." And bowing

lowly to the Prince of Wales, leaving Bertrand stupified, he disappeared.

"An hour afterwards, the constable, free and joyous, traversed the town in triumph with his Bretons, whose acclamations might have reached to heaven. One single person, perhaps, did not join in the *cortège* that followed Duguesclin in his oration. This was one of the officers of the Prince of Wales, one of those chiefs of the great companies whom they called captains, and who had a voice in the councils, though their opinion went for nothing. It was, in fact, an individual of our acquaintance, with his vizor always closed, who, having entered Bertrand's room with Chandos, had been struck with the voice of the unknown knight, and had not lost sight of him for a moment. Thus scarcely had the knight disappeared, than the captain assembled some of his men, made them mount their horses to discover the trace of the fugitive, and himself, having obtained information, hastened on the road to Spain.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE POLICY OF MUSARON.

AGENOR, however, urged by the inextinguishable anxiety of the lover who can obtain no news; Agénor, we say, advanced at a rapid pace towards the states of Don Pedro. In his way, he rallied, thanks to a certain reputation he had acquired by his journey to France, the Bretons, who, after the ransom paid, were seeking Duguesclin to fight under him. He thus encountered many Spanish knights, who were hastening to the rendezvous fixed by Don Henry de Transtámara, who, they said, was to re-enter Spain and commence opening negotiations with the Prince of Wales, dissatisfied with Don Pedro. Every time he slept at a town or a village of any importance, Agénor made enquiries about Hafiz and Gildaz, and Maria de Padilla, and asked if they had not seen pass a courier seeking a Frenchman, or a young and handsome Moresca followed by two attendants, and hastening to the French frontier. Every time, also, that a negative reply reached his ear, the young man buried, with greater excitement, his spurs in his horse's flanks. And Musaron said, in his dry philosophical tone:—"Sir, you must really be in love with this young woman, for she costs us a deal of trouble." By force of marching, Agénor gained ground; by force of enquiries he became resigned. Twenty leagues still separated him from the court of Burgos. He knew that an army, very devoted, very warlike, very fresh, and, consequently, dangerous for Don Pedro, only awaited the signal to rally itself, and oppose to the conqueror of Navarrete a new hydra's head, more biting, more venomous than ever. Agénor demanded of himself, and demanded of Musaron, if it would not be proper, before continuing any political negotiation, to enter upon the amorous negotiations with Maria de Padilla. Musaron admitted that diplomacy was good, but he maintained that by taking Don Pedro, Maria, Mothril and Spain, they would take Burgos, in which Burgos they could not fail to take Aïssa, if she was still there. This greatly consoled Agénor, and he made a few more leagues. Thus became diminished by degrees, the circle destined to stifle Don Pedro, whom prosperity blinded, the intrigues of his favourites occupied with futilities, at a time when his throne was in danger.

Musaron, the most conceited of men, especially

since he considered himself rich, would not suffer his master to adventure once to push towards Burgos, shut himself up in it, and conier with Donna Maria. He took advantage, on the contrary, of his want of spirits and his amorous negligences, to retain him in the midst of the Bretons and partizans of Transtamara, so that the young knight was soon chief of a considerable force, as much owing to his mission to France, as by his assiduity in nourishing the element of war. He received the arrivals, kept open house, corresponded with the constable, with his brother Oliver, who was preparing to pass five thousand Bretons beyond the frontier, to support his brother, and assist him in gaining his first battle. Musaron became a tactician; he passed whole days in writing out plans of battles, and calculating the number of crowns that Caverley might have amassed since the last affair, that he might have the satisfaction of not deceiving himself the first time they fought.

It was in these warlike dispositions, that important news arrived to Agénor; despite the vigilance of Musaron, an expert emissary announced to Agénor the departure of Don Pedro for a country seat, and the disappearance of Aïssa and Maria, coinciding with the journey of the king. The same courier knew that Gildaz had died on his road, and that Hafiz alone had reappeared at Donna Maria's. Agénor, to learn so many things, and such important ones, had only occasion to give thirty crowns to a countryman who had spoken with Maria's nurse, the mother of poor Gildaz.

Thus, when Agénor learnt these facts, despite Musaron, despite his military companions, despite all, he threw himself on the best horse, which he made take the road to the chateau which Don Pedro had chosen for a residence. Musaron cursed and swore, but he also departed for the chateau.

CHAPTER LXIII.

HOW THE CRIME OF MOTHRIIL HAPPILY SUCCEEDED.

At the chateau of Don Pedro, mourning and grief became more terrible and more loud when day-break lighted the apartment of Donna Maria.

Don Pedro had been unable to repose, his attendants pretended they had heard him weep.

Mothril had consumed the night in a way more advantageous to his interests; he had so contrived as to destroy the least vestige of his crime. Left alone with Aïssa, bestowing on her the tenderest care, with the skill of the most able surgeon, he had, from the commencement of his interview with her, moulded, like soft wax, the still hovering spirit of the young girl. Thus, when Aïssa had uttered a cry on beholding the corpse of Donna Maria, Mothril had feigned to feel an involuntary horror, and had thrown a cloak over the inanimate remains of the king's mistress. And as Aïssa regarded it with terror:—"Poor child," murmured Mothril, "return thanks to God, who has saved you!"

"Saved me?" said the young girl.

"From a frightful death, yes, dear child."

"Who then struck me?"

"She, whose hand still grasps your poignard."

"Donna Maria! her, so good, so generous; impossible!"

Mothril smiled with that disdainful compassion which always imposes on minds struck with some great interest:—"The mistress of the king,

generous and good for Aïssa, whom the king adores; you cannot believe it, my child?"

"But," said Aïssa, "since she wished to send me away."

"To unite you, she said, to this French knight, eh?" said the Moor, in his still calm and benevolent tone.

Aïssa drew herself up, quite pale, at finding the secret of her love in the hands of a man most interested in thwarting it.

"Fear nothing," continued the Moor; "that which Maria could not do, from jealousy and love of the king, I will do myself. Aïssa, you love, you say; well, I promise to assist you; provided that the daughter of my kings lives, and lives happy, I desire nothing more on earth."

Aïssa, petrified at hearing Mothril speak in this way, could not help regarding him with eyes still weary with the sleep of death:—"He deceives me," she said. Then, thinking of the corpse of Donna Maria—"Donna Maria is dead!" she repeated wildly.

"And listen to the cause, my dear child; the king loves you passionately, and he declared so yesterday to Donna Maria—the latter entered her apartment mad with rage and jealousy. Don Pedro proposed to unite you to him by the ties of marriage, which had always been the ambition of Donna Maria. She then renounced life, she emptied her ring into the silver cup, and, that she might not leave you behind her triumphant, and a queen, to avenge herself at the same time of Don Pedro and of myself who so doats on you, on many grounds, she took your poignard and struck you."

"During my sleep, then, for I remember nothing," said Aïssa, "a cloud obscured my sight; I heard something like a heavy fall and stifled rattle—I think I rose up, that I felt some hands on my own, and immediately the thrust of the cold steel."

"It was the last effort of your enemy, she fell near you; but the poison was stronger for her than the poignard for you—I discovered in you a spark of life, I reanimated it, I have had the happiness of saving you."

"Oh! Maria, Maria," murmured the young girl, "you were kind, however."

"You say this because she favoured your love with Agénor de Mauléon, my child," said Mothril to her quietly, and with a benevolence too affected not to conceal a smouldering fury; because she introduced him into your apartment at Soria —"

"You know——"

"I know all; the king knows it as well—Maria had dishonoured you in the eyes of Don Pedro before assassinating you. But she feared that the calumny would not find its way into the mind of Don Pedro, and that he would pardon you for having belonged to another; we are so indulgent when we love!—so that she employed the steel to cut you off from the world of the living."

"The king knows that Agénor —"

"The king is mad with love and anger; the king, who had already bribed Hafiz to conduct you to the chateau, when I was ignorant of all; the king I say, will wait for your recovery, to again draw you towards him—'tis excusable, my child; he loves you."

"When that time comes, I will die," said Aïssa, "for my hand will not tremble, will not slide from my bosom as that of Donna Maria has done."

"You die! you, my idol! you, my adored child!" exclaimed the Moor, falling on his knees. No, you shall live, I have told you so, happy, and ever blessing my name."

"Without Agénor, I will not live."

"He is of a different religion from yours, my child."

"I will embrace his religion."

"He hates me."

"He will pardon you, when he no longer sees you between him and me. Besides, what matters it to me?—I love! I know none in the world but the object of my love."

"Not even him who has saved you for your lover?" said Mothril, humbly, with an affected grief that deeply touched the heart of the young girl; "you sacrifice me, even when I expose myself to die for you!"

"How so?"

"Assuredly, Aïssa; you would live with Don Agénor, I will lend you my assistance."

"You?"

"I! Mothril; yes, Aïssa."

"You deceive me."

"Why?"

"Prove to me your sincerity."

"'Tis easy. You fear the king—well, I will prevent your seeing the king. Does this satisfy you?"

"Not entirely."

"I understand, you wish to again see the Frenchman?"

"Above everything."

"Wait till you are in a condition to support the journey, I will conduct you to him; I will place my life in his hands."

"But Maria also conducted me to him—"

"Certainly, she had an interest in ridding herself of you, and she would, no doubt, have preferred sparing herself a crime. In the sight of God, the day we shall appear at his tribunal, murder will be a heavy burden." In pronouncing these terrible words, Mothril exhibited for a moment, on his pale visage, that suffering of the damned, which has neither cessation or hope in its tortures.

"Well! what will you do then?" continued Aïssa.

"I will conceal you until such time as you have recovered; then, as I have told you, I will unite you to the Seigneur de Mauléon."

"'Tis all I ask; by doing this, you will become for me a divine being. But the king?"

"Oh! he will oppose it with all his strength; if he penetrates our design—my death will be his best resource; I dead, you will become an easy prey, Aïssa."

"Or else forced to die."

"Would you rather die than live with the Frenchman?"

"No! oh no! speak! speak!"

"You must, dear child, if by chance Don Pedro comes to see you, to speak to you, to question you respecting Agénor de Mauléon, you must, I say, maintain boldly that Donna Maria lied in affirming that you loved the Frenchman, and especially that you have given him possession of your love. By this mode, the king will no longer distrust the Frenchman; he will no longer surveil our conduct; he will leave us free and happy. You must also, and this, my child, is the most important, you must search your memory and find in it this:—Donna Maria spoke to you before striking you; she told you, no doubt, to avow to the king your dishonour; that you refused, and that she then struck."

"I remember nothing!" exclaimed Aïssa, struck with fear, as any honest and innocent mind would have been at the exposure of this infernal theory

of the Moor; "I will remember nothing. Neither will I deny my love for Mauléon. This love is the light of my religion! his name is the star that guides my life! Proud of being his, I am so far from hiding it, that I would proclaim it before every king on earth; count not on me for such falsehoods. If Don Pedro speaks to me, I shall reply to him."

Mothril became pale. This last, this feeble obstacle rendered null the result of a murder; the simple obstinacy of a child bound hand and foot a man of vigor, who would have dragged a world in his train. He foresaw that he must no longer insist. He had, however, done the work of Sisyphus—he had rolled the rock to the summit of the mountain; but the rock again slipped down. Mothril had neither time nor strength to recommence. "My child," he said, "you will act as you please, your interest, interpreted by yourself, in accordance with your heart, and with your caprice, is my only law. This is your wish—it is mine. Reply, then, to the king as you like. I know well that your avowal will cause my head to fall, for I have always proclaimed your innocence and your purity; I have never consented to allow a suspicion to rest upon you; let my head pay for my fault, that is, for your honour. Allah wills it—let his will be accomplished."

"I cannot tell a lie, however," said Aïssa. Besides, why should you allow the king to speak to me? Remove him—'tis easy; could you not transport me to some secret place—conceal me, in fact? Are not my health and my wound sufficient pretext? In that I aid you by my very position. To lie! oh, never! Deny Agénor! never!"

Mothril endeavoured, but in vain, to hide the joy which the words of Aïssa produced in his mind. Depart with Aïssa—remove her for a time from the questions of Don Pedro, and thus allow to cool his rage, hatred, regrets—the remembrance of Maria—gain a month—it was to gain all. Now this chance of safety was offered by Aïssa herself—Mothril seized it eagerly.

"You wish it, my child," he said, "we will depart. Have you any repugnance to the chateau of Montiel, of which the king has named me governor?"

"I have no repugnance but to the presence of Don Pedro. I will go where you wish."

Mothril kissed the hand and robe of Aïssa, carried her gently in his arms to the adjoining room. He had the corpse of Donna Maria removed, and calling two women of his nation, upon whose fidelity he could rely, he placed them with the young girl, commanding them, on their lives, not to speak to Aïssa, nor to suffer any one to address a word to her. All things thus arranged, he repaired to the king, after composing his spirits and his features.

Don Pedro had just received several letters from the town. They announced to him that envoys from Brittany and from England had appeared in the neighbourhood; that reports of war circulated about; that the Prince of Wales drew closer round the new capital his cordon of warriors, to force, by the presence of an invincible army, his *protégé* of Navarrete to pay the expenses of the war and discharge his gratitude. This news saddened Don Pedro, but did not discourage him. He sent for Mothril, who entered his royal chamber at the moment the desire of the king manifested itself.

"Aïssa?" said Don Pedro, anxiously.

"Seigneur, her wound is dangerous, deep; we shall not save this victim."

"Again misfortune!" exclaimed Don Pedro. "Oh! it is too much at once:—to lose Donna Maria who loved me so; Aïssa whom I love to delirium; recommence a bloody, implacable war—'tis too much, Mothril, too much for the heart of one man." And Don Pedro showed to his minister the advices sent by the governor of Burgos and the neighbouring towns.

"My king, for a moment we must forget love," said Mothril; "we must prepare for war."

"The treasury is empty."

"A tax will refill it. Sign the tax I have asked of you."

"It must be so. May I see Aïssa?"

"Aïssa is suspended like a flower on the precipice; a breath may launch her into eternity."

"Has she spoken?"

"Yes, seigneur."

"What has she said?"

"A few words that explain all. It appears that Donna Maria wished to force her to dishonour herself by an avowal to ruin her in your estimation. The courageous child refused, the jealous Donna Maria struck her."

"Aïssa says so?"

"She will repeat it as soon as her strength is returned; but I fear that, in this world, her voice will not again be heard."

"My God!" said the king.

"One only remedy may save her. A tradition of my country promises life to the wounded person who at night, by the vapours of the new moon, gently touches the wound with a certain magic herb."

"This herb must be procured," said the king, with the fervour of superstition and of love.

"It is not found in this country, seigneur; I have seen none but at Montiel."

"At Montiel—send to Montiel, Mothril."

"I said, seigneur, that the wound must touch the herb whilst yet on its stem. Ah! 'tis a sovereign remedy. I would willingly carry Aïssa to Montiel, but would she support the journey?"

Don Pedro replied:—"She shall be carried as gently as the bird carries himself when he glides through the air, balanced on his two wings. Let her go, Mothril, let her go; but you, remain with me."

"'Tis I alone, seigneur, who can recite the magic form during the operation."

"Then I must remain alone?"

"No, seigneur, for, Aïssa recovered, you shall come to Montiel, and you will quit her no more."

"Yes, Mothril, yes, you are right—I will not again quit her; I shall thus be happy; and the body of Donna Maria, what is done with it? I trust the greatest honours are rendered to it."

"I have heard it said, seigneur," said Mothril, that in your religion the corpse of the suicide is denied sepulture, the church then, must remain ignorant of the suicide of Donna Maria."

"Everyone must remain ignorant of it, Mothril."

"But your attendants?"

"I will say in open court that Donna Maria has died of fever; and when I have thus spoken, no one will raise their voice."

"Blind, blind fool!" thought Mothril.

"Thus, Mothril you depart with Aïssa?" said Don Pedro.

"This very evening, seigneur."

"Myself will give my time to the obsequies of

Donna Maria; I will sign the edict; I will make an appeal to my army, to my nobles; I will conjure the storm."

"And I," thought Mothril, "will seek a shelter for myself."

CHAPTER LXIV.

HOW AGENOR DISCOVERED THAT HE HAD ARRIVED TOO LATE.

LEAVING soldiers, officers, and lovers of war, to lose themselves in projects, plans, and stratagems, Agénor pursued his object, which was to recover Aïssa, his greatest wealth. Love began to predominate in him over ambition, even over duty; for, impatient to enter Spain, to obtain news of Aïssa, the young man had suffered, as we have seen, the *envoyés* of the King of France and those of the Count de Laval to reach Bordeaux, and pay the ransom which the constable had himself fixed upon in a moment of heroic pride. Thus, as this page would be lost to our history, since it is wanting in that of Agénor, if we did not replace it by history itself, we are thus forced to say, in two words, that Guienne trembled with grief the day on which the Prince of Wales, generous as ever, allowed to escape from Bordeaux his prisoner, ransomed by the gold of entire France. We shall add that the first care of Bertrand was to hasten to Paris to thank the king; the rest we shall see, if we do not already know it. Henceforth we shall be, as to the constable, candid and impartial historians. Agénor, then, and his faithful Musaron took their way in rapid marches towards the chateau, in which Don Pedro had hoped to possess Aïssa. Agénor comprehended that there was no time to be lost; he knew Don Pedro and Mothril too well to amuse himself with such hopes:—"Who knows," he said to himself, "if Maria l'adilla herself, from weakness, from fear, has not compromised with her dignity; whether an alliance with the Moor Mothril has not appeared to her more preferable to the chances of rupture with Don Pedro, and whether, playing the part of an indulgent spouse, the favourite does not shut her eyes to a caprice of her royal lover?" These thoughts made Agénor's impetuous blood boil; he reasoned no longer but as one in love, that is, he talked nonsense with all the appearances of good sense. On his way he distributed some smart blows with his lance, which fell, some on the mule of Musaron, some on the back bone of the good squire; but the result was the same, shaken by the blow, Musaron shook his mule. They thus proceeded, with discourses, of which we shall extract the substance for the edification and amusement of our readers:—"Look you, Musaron," said Agénor, "when I shall have conversed for an hour only with Donna Maria, I shall know all the present, and shall know how to act for the future."

"But, sir," you will learn nothing at all, and you will finish by falling into the hands of that scoundrel of a Moor, who watches you like the spider does a fly."

"You are always harping on the same thing, Musaron; do you suppose a Saracen is worth a christian?"

"A Saracen, when he has anything in his head, is as good as three christians. 'Tis just as if you said: 'Is a woman worth a man?' Yet we see every day men subjugated and vanquished by women. Now do you know why, sir? Because the women always consider what they are about to

do; whilst the men always neglect what they ought to think of."

"You conclude——"

"That Donna Maria has been prevented, by some intrigue of the Saracen, sending you Donna Aïssa."

"Well?"

"Well! and that Mothril, who has found means of preventing Donna Maria sending you your mistress, awaits you, well armed in mind and body; that he will trap you, like they do the larks in a meadow; that he will kill you, and that you will not possess Aïssa."

Agénor replied by a cry of rage, and spurred his horse. Thus he arrived at the chateau, whose aspect struck him mournfully. Some spots are eloquent, they speak a language intelligible to choice minds. Agénor examined, by the first rays of the moon, the edifice that contained all his love, all his life. Whilst he contemplated, there was accomplishing in its mysterious and impenetrable recesses, that frightful assassination, the triumph of Mothril. Harassed with such a long journey, and of having learnt so little; certain of being henceforth face to face with the one he sought for, Agénor, after long hours spent in regarding the walls, reached, followed by Musaron, a small village, situated on the other side of the mountain; there, we know, lived some goat-herds; Agénor requested a shelter of them, for which he paid generously. He succeeded in procuring parchment and ink, and made Musaron write a letter to Donna Maria, a letter full of affectionate regrets, proofs of gratitude, but also containing doubts and disquietudes expressed with all the delicacy of French minds. Agénor, to be more certain of the success of the message, would gladly have charged Musaron with it; but the latter observed to his master, that, known by Mothril, he ran a much greater danger than a simple messenger taken from amongst the shepherds of the mountain. Agénor listened to reason, and sent a shepherd with the letter. Himself slept on two sheepskins, side by side with Musaron, and awaited patiently. But the sleep of lovers is like that of madmen, thieves, and the ambitious, it is easily interrupted. Two hours after lying down, Agénor was up, and on the side of the hill, from whence he could see the door of this chateau; although at a great distance, he watched the return of his messenger. His letter contained as follows:—"Noble lady, so generous, so devoted to the interests of two poor lovers, I am returned to Spain, like the dog who has broken his chain; of Aïssa, no news; for pity's sake, inform me; I am at the village of Quebra, where your reply will bring me death or life. What has happened? What must I hope or fear?"

The shepherd did not return. Suddenly the doors of the chateau were opened, Agénor felt his heart beat, but it was not the goatherd who came out. A long file of soldiers, women, and courtiers, issuing we know not whence, for the king had arrived at the chateau with a small retinue; a long *cortège*, in a word, followed a litter that contained a corpse; this was recognized from the black drapery that enclosed the litter. Agénor said to himself that the augury was sinister. He had scarcely formed this idea, when the doors were again closed:—"These are very singular delays," he said to Musaron, who tossed his head in sign of discontent:—"Go, then, and obtain some information," said Mauleon; and he seated himself on the opposite side of the little hill, amongst the dry heath.

A quarter of an hour had not elapsed when Musaron returned, bringing a soldier, who appeared to have required much pressing to come. "I tell you," cried Musaron, "that 'tis my master who will pay, and will pay generously."

"Who will pay——what?" said Agénor.

"Seigneur, the news!"

"What news?"

"Seigneur, this soldier makes part of the escort which conducts the corpse to Burgos."

"But in God's name, what corpse?"

"Ah! seigneur, ah! my dear master, from another than me you would not have believed it, but from him, you will believe it, perhaps; the corpse conducted to Burgos is that of Donna Maria de Padilla!"

Agénor uttered a cry of despair and doubt.

"It's true," said the soldier, "and I am in haste to go and resume my rank in the escort."

"Misfortune! misfortune!" exclaimed Mauleon; "but Mothril is at the chateau?"

"Ah! seigneur," said the soldier, "Mothril has left for Montiel."

"Gone! he! with his litter?"

"Which contains the dying young girl, yes, seigneur."

"The young girl, Aïssa, dying! Oh! Musaron, I am dead!" sighed the unhappy knight, falling back on the ground, as if really dead, which terrified the good squire, but little accustomed to fainting fits on the part of his master.

"Seigneur knight, this is all I know," said the soldier, "and, moreover, only know it by chance; 'twas I who, last night, raised the young girl, wounded with a poignard, and the Senora Maria poisoned."

"Oh! cursed night! oh! misfortune, misfortune!" repeated the young man, half mad; "there, my friend, take these ten florins, as though you had not come to announce to me the misfortune of my life."

"Thanks, Seigneur Knight, and adieu," said the soldier, hastening away quickly through the dwarf brooms.

Musaron, his hand over his eyes, was examining the horizon. "There, there, yonder, very distant," he exclaimed, "my dear seigneur, do you see those men, that litter that crosses the plain after the mountain? Do you see on horseback, with his white cloak, the Saracen, our enemy?"

"Musaron, Musaron," said the knight, revived by the fury of grief, "let us mount our horses, let us crush this miserable, and if Aïssa must die, let me at least receive her last sigh."

Musaron permitted himself to place a hand on the shoulder of his master:—"Seigneur," he said, "we never reason well on a very recent event; we are two, and they are twelve; we are tired, they are fresh; besides, they go to Montiel, we know it; we will rejoin them at Montiel. You see, dear seigneur, above all, we must know from the bottom the history which the soldier was unable to tell you; we must know why Donna Maria has died poisoned, and why Donna Aïssa is wounded by a poignard."

"You are right, my faithful friend," said Agénor; "do with me as you like."

"I will make of you a man triumphant and happy, my master."

Agénor shook his head in despair. Musaron knew there was no remedy for this malady but in great excitement of body and mind. He reconducted his master to the camp, where already the Bretons and Spaniards, faithful to Trans a-

mara, concealed themselves less, and openly avowed their projects, since the vague rumour had reached them of the liberation of Duguesclin, and especially since they saw their forces increasing daily.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE PILGRIMS.

WITHIN a few leagues of Toledo, on a sandy road, bordered by a wood of stunted pines, Agénor and his faithful Musaron were pacing along sorrowfully, at the decline of day, seeking a *venta* (or roadside inn) where they might repose for a moment their weary limbs, and have a hare cooked, which the arrow of Musaron had struck in her form. Suddenly they heard behind them, on the sand, a hasty movement; it was the gallop of a swift mule, who bore on his robust loins a pilgrim, whose head was covered by a hat with wide brims, and still more so by a species of veil, fitted to the brim of this hat. The pilgrim gave the spur to his mule, and governed it like a man who knew the whole exercise of a perfect cavalier. The animal, of an excellent race, fled, rather than raced, over the sand, and disappeared so quickly from the sight of our travellers, that they could not distinguish the sound of his voice, which said to them in passing:—“*Vayan ustedes con Dios* (God be with you).”

Ten minutes had not elapsed, when Musaron heard another sound similar to the first; he turned round, and had only time to draw aside his own horse, and that of his master: four cavaliers arrived with the speed of lightning. One of them, the most advanced, the chief, was habited in the dress of a pilgrim, similar to the costume of the previous one, whom the travellers had seen pass; but, under this habit, the prudent pilgrim concealed an armour, the vizor even was applied to the face, and it was a curious spectacle, *malgre* the night, to observe the face of a cavalier under a wide-brimmed hat. The stranger went up and smelt, as we may say, our two travellers, as a bloodhound would have done; but Agénor had prudently lowered his helmet, and placed his hand on his sword. Musaron kept himself on the defensive.

“Seigneur,” said, in bad Spanish, a hollow voice as from a well, “have you not seen pass a companion of mine, a pilgrim like myself, mounted on a black mule, swift as the wind?”

The sound of this voice disagreeably struck Agénor as a confused dream; but his duty was to reply; he did so courteously. “Seigneur Pilgrim, or Seigneur Knight,” he replied also in Spanish, “the person of whom you speak has passed about ten minutes; he is mounted, indeed, on a mule so swift, that few horses in the world could follow him.”

Musaron fancied he remarked that the voice of Agénor struck the pilgrim with some surprise, for he approached nearer and impudently:—“This information is more precious to me,” he said, “than you suppose, chevalier; it is given to me, also, with so good a grace, that I should be delighted to make acquaintance with him who gives it me. I see by your foreign accent that we both come from the north—’tis a reason for our becoming more intimate. Raise, then, if you please, your vizor, that I may have the honour of thanking you with uncovered face.”

“Uncover yourself, sir knight,” replied Mauléon, who was more and more disagreeably affected by this voice and question.

The pilgrim hesitated; he finished even by refusing in a way that showed how perfidious and interested had been his request; and, without adding a word, he made a sign to his companions, and continued at a gallop the road followed by the first pilgrim.

“What an unpudent fellow!” said Musaron, when he had lost sight of him.

“And a most villainous voice, Musaron; I have heard it in some unlucky moment I think.”

“I agree with you, seigneur, and if our horses were not so fatigued, we should do well to run after these *drôles*, some matter of great curiosity is about to take place.”

“What matter to us, Musaron?” replied Mauléon, like a man whom nothing further interests. “We are going to Toledo, where our friends must be assembled. Toledo is near Montiel; this is all I know, all I wish to know.”

“At Toledo we shall have news of the constable,” said Musaron.

“Probably also of Don Henry de Transtamara,” said Agénor; “we shall receive orders, we shall become machines, automats, the sole resource, the only consolation of men, who, having lost their soul, no longer know what to say or what to do in life.”

“There! there!” said Musaron, “there will always be plenty of time to despair—on the last day comes the victory, as a proverb of our country says.”

“Or death, eh? this is what you fear to add?”

“Well, seigneur, we can die but once.”

“Do you fancy that I fear?”

“Oh! monseigneur you do not fear enough, ’tis this that provokes me.”

Thus discoursing they reached the wished for *venta*. It was a lonely house, as are in Spain these shelters, these providential refuges, which travellers meet with, against the sun by day, against the frost at night; places ardently desired, and often as impassable as the oasis in the desert, because it is just possible to die of hunger, thirst, and fatigue, before encountering another. When Agénor and Musaron had put their horses in stable, or rather when the worthy squire had done it alone, Agénor observed in the lower hall of the *venta*, before a bright fire, and in the midst of the muleteers, buried in the most profound sleep, the two pilgrims, who, instead of conversing, mutually turned their back to each other.

“Ah! I thought they were companions,” said Agénor, surprised.

The pilgrim with the veil buried himself deeper in his shadow when the two fresh travellers entered.

As to the pilgrim with the vizor, he seemed to watch, with great curiosity, the moment when a corner of the veil of his pretended companion, might be raised. This moment did not arrive; silent, motionless, visibly annoyed, the mysterious personage finished, that he might not reply to his importunate intruder, by feigning a deep sleep.

By degrees the muleteers repaired to the court and lay down under their mules wrapt in their cloaks; there remained at the fire only Mauléon, who had supped with his squire, and the two pilgrims, still occupied, the one in watching, the other in sleeping. The one with the vizor, commenced a conversation with Agénor by some paltry excuses for the manner in which he had quitted him on the road. He then enquired of him if he would not soon retire to his room, where



no doubt, he would sleep better than on the stool. Agénor, still masked, was about to persist in remaining, were it only to annoy the stranger, when the idea occurred to him that by remaining he would learn nothing. Evidently to him, the other pilgrim was not asleep, something, therefore, was about to take place between the two men, each of whom wished to be alone. Agénor lived in times and in a country wherein curiosity frequently saved the lives of the curious. He feigned in his turn to retire to a chamber which the host showed him; but he stopped behind the door, which, solid and massive, was still sufficiently ill-jointed to permit the sight to reach the fire. He was right, for a spectacle worth attention, was reserved to him.

When the pilgrim with the vizor found himself alone with the other, whom he supposed asleep, he rose up and made a few steps in the hall to try the intensity of this sleep.

The slumbering pilgrim did not budge.

The man with the vizor now approached him on the points of his toes, and stretched out his hand to lift the veil that hid from him the features of the pilgrim.

But before he had touched the veil, the pilgrim was on his legs, and in an angry tone:—"What do you want?" he said, "and why do you disturb my sleep?"

"Which is not very profound, seigneur pilgrim, veiled," said the other, in a tone of raillery.

"But which ought to be respected, messire the curious, with the iron visage."

"You have good motives, no doubt, for its not being known whether yours is of iron or of flesh, seigneur pilgrim."

"My motives regard no one, and if I veil myself, 'tis that I do not wish to be known, this is clear."

"Seigneur, I am very curious, and will see

you," said the man with the vizor, in the same bantering tone.

The pilgrim immediately raised his frock, and drawing a long poignard:—"You will see this first," he replied.

The man with the vizor now reflected a moment, he then drew the heavy bolts of the door behind which Agénor heard and saw. At the same time he opened a window looking into the road, and introduced by it his four men, completely armed, and cased in iron:—"You see," he now said to the pilgrim, "that defence will be in vain, and even impossible, seigneur. Be good enough, then, simply, and to spare a life which I think very valuable, to answer me the following question."

The pilgrim, the poignard in his hand, trembled with rage and disquietude.

"Are you, or are you not," said the aggressor, "Don Henry de Transtamara?"

The pilgrim started. "To such a question, put in this form, and with such preliminaries," he replied, "I ought not to reply, if I am the person you say, without expecting death. I shall, therefore, defend my life, for I am really the prince whose name you have pronounced." And by a majestic movement he uncovered his noble features.

"The prince!" cried Mauléon, behind the door which he endeavoured to burst open.

"Him!" cried the man in the vizor, with a ferocious joy, "I was quite sure of it, companions, we have followed him long enough; from Bordeaux, is some distance. Oh! sheath your poignard, my prince, we have no intention of killing you, but of setting you at ransom. Body of Saints! we shall be accommodating; sheath, sheath!"

Agénor struck with redoubled blows against the door to burst it—but the oak resisted.

"Pass to that door, to confine the one who is knocking," said the man with the vizor to his followers, "and leave me to persuade the prince."

"Brigand!" said Henry, contemptuously, "you would deliver me to my brother?"

"If he pays me handsomer than you, yes!"

"I said rightly, that it was better to die here," exclaimed the prince; "Help! help!"

"Oh! seigneur," exclaimed the bandit, "we shall be compelled to kill you; your head will pay us less, perhaps, than your entire and living body, but still we must be content with it. We will carry your head to Don Pedro."

"'Tis what we shall see!" exclaimed Agénor, who, by a supreme effort, had burst open the door, and fell with repeated blows on the four men of the brigand.

"The result of this will be, that we shall kill him," said the latter, drawing his sword to attack Henry. "You have there a very blundering friend; order him, therefore, to remain quiet." But the bandit had not finished, when a third pilgrim, whom they had not expected, entered from without. This one wore neither mask nor veil; he thought himself sufficiently habited, sufficiently covered by the dress of a pilgrim. His wide shoulders, his enormous arms, his square and intelligent head, announced a vigorous and intrepid champion. He appeared on the threshold of the door, and contemplated with astonishment, but without rage or fear, this confusion in the room of the hostelry. "They are fighting here," he said. "Holloa! christians, who is right, and who is wrong?" and his manly and imperious voice rose above the tumult as that of the lion rises above the tempests in the gorges of the east.

The attitude of the combatants at the mere sound of this voice was singular.

The prince uttered a cry of joy and surprise; the man with the vizor recoiled in terror. Musaron exclaimed:—"On my life, 'tis M. the Constable!"

"Constable! constable!" said the prince, "help they would assassinate me!"

"You, my prince!" roared Duguesclin, tearing off his robe to allow his movements more freedom, "and who, pray?"

"Friends!" said the brigand to his myrmidons, "We must kill these men or die here. We are armed, they are not; the devil yields them to us; instead of a hundred thousand florins, it is two thousand that await us. Forward!"

The constable, with incomparable coolness, extended his arm before the brigand had finished his sentence; he seized him by the throat as easily as he would a sheep, and threw him heavily on the floor; then wresting from him his sword:—"I am now armed!" he said, "three against three; come my gentlemen of night!"

"We are lost," murmured the companions of the bandit, flying through the still open window.

Agénor, however, had rushed forward, he undid the vizor of the defeated brigand and exclaimed:—"Caverley! I guessed as much."

"He is a venomous beast, whom we must crush here," said the constable.

"I undertake it," said Musaron, ready to cut his throat with the knife at his belt.

"Mercy!" murmured the brigand, "mercy! abuse not your victory."

"Yes," said the prince, embracing Duguesclin in a transport of joy; "yes, mercy, we have too many thanks to render to God, who has assembled us here, to trouble ourselves about this miserable; let him live, and get himself hanged elsewhere!"

Caverley, in the effusion of his gratitude, kissed the feet of the generous prince.

"Let him fly, then!" said Duguesclin.

"Go, bandit," grumbled Musaron, opening the door to him.

Caverley did not wait to be told twice; he ran so nimbly, that the horses would not have overtaken him had the prince changed his mind.

After mutually congratulating each other, the prince, the constable, and Agénor, conversed about the events of the approaching war.

"You see," said the constable, "that I am punctual at the rendezvous, I was going to Toledo, as you enjoined me at Bordeaux. You reckon on Toledo, then?"

"I have great hopes," said the prince, "if Toledo open its doors to me."

"But this is not certain," replied the constable. "Since I have travelled under this dress, that is, for four days, I know more than I have learnt for two years. These Toledans hold with Don Pedro. We should have to besiege it."

"Dear constable, expose you to such dangers on my account!"

"Dear sire, I have but one word to say; I have promised that you shall reign in Castile; it shall be so, or I will die. And, besides, I have my revenge to take. Thus, scarcely by your presence of mind have you liberated me from Bordeaux, than in ten days I have seen King Charles and regained the frontier. Eight days have I followed your traces through Spain; for my brother Oliver and the Bègue de Vilaines had received advice that you had passed through Burgos, on your way to Toledo."

"It's true, I passed through it; I await under Toledo the great officers of my army. I only disguised myself at Burgos."

"And they also, monseigneur, and the same

idea occurred to me. The chiefs, in this way, pass unperceived to prepare the lodgings of the soldiers. The dress of the pilgrim is fashionable; every one at present seems willing to make a pilgrimage to Spain; so much so, that this rogue of a Caverley had assumed the dress with us. Now, here we are united. You will choose a residence, and draw round you all the Spaniards of your party; I, all the knights and soldiers of all countries. Let us lose no time. Don Pedro still floats; he has lost his best adviser, Donna Maria, the only creature who loved him in this world. Let us profit by his stupor, let us give him battle before he has time to recover himself."

"Donna Maria dead!" said Henry; "are they sure of it?"

"I am sure of it myself," replied Agénor, sorrowfully; "I saw her body pass"

"And what is Don Pedro doing?"

"It is not known. He has had interred at Burgos the poor woman, his victim, he then disappeared."

"Disappeared! Is it possible? But you say that Donna Maria is his victim; narrate this to me, constable, I have not spoken to a living soul these eight days."

"This is what happened," said the constable: "my spies gave me the information; Don Pedro loved a Moresca, the daughter of that cursed Moor; Donna Maria suspected it, she even discovered a correspondence between the king and the Moresca; incensed beyond measure, she poisoned herself after having pierced the heart of her rival."

"Oh!" exclaimed Agénor; "oh! this is not possible, seigneur. It would be a crime so odious, a treason so black, that the sun would recoil with horror from it!"

The prince and the constable regarded with astonishment the young man who thus expressed himself; but they could obtain no explanation from him.

"Pardon me, messeigneurs," said Agénor, humbly, "I have a secret of youth, a sweet and bitter secret, the moiety of which Donna Maria carries to her tomb, and the other moiety of which I would religiously preserve."

"In love, poor child!" said the constable.

Agénor made no reply, except:—"I am at the orders of your lordships, and ready to die in your service."

"I know," said Henry, "that you are a loyal and devoted man, an ingenious, an indefatigable *serviteur*, so reckon on my gratitude; but tell us you know something about the loves of Don Pedro."

"I know all, seigneur, and if you command me to speak——"

"Where might Don Pedro be at this moment? This is all we wish to know."

"Messeigneurs," said Agénor, "grant me a week, and I will reply to you for a certainty."

"A week!" said the prince, "what think you of it, constable?"

"I say, sire," replied Bertrand, "that the week is necessary to us to organise our army and receive the reinforcements and the money from France. We, therefore, risk absolutely nothing."

"The more so, seigneur," added Mauléon, "that if my project succeeds, you will have in your power the real cause, the real firebrand of the war, Don Pedro, whom I shall deliver to you with great joy."

"He is right," said the king, "with the capture of one of us, finishes the war in Spain."

"Oh! not so, sire!" exclaimed the constable, "I swear to you, that if you were made prisoner, which, by God's help, will not happen, I would pursue, were you even cut to pieces, the punishment of that miscreant, Don Pedro, who slaughters his prisoners in cold blood, and allies himself with infidels."

"'Tis my advice, Bertrand," said the prince; "trouble not yourself about me; if I were taken and killed, recover my body by victory, and place it inanimate on the throne of Castile; provided that the bastard, the traitor, the assassin, were lying at the foot of this throne, I declare myself happy and triumphant."

"Sire, 'tis settled; now let us," added the constable, "set this young man at liberty."

"And a rendezvous?" said Mauléon.

"Before Toledo, which we shall invest."

"In eight days?"

"In eight days." Henry tenderly embraced the young man, quite confused by such an honour. "Let me alone," said the prince, "I wish to show you that having shared my misfortunes, you shall be authorised to share also my prosperity."

"And I," added the constable, "I, who am indebted to him for a part of the liberty I enjoy, promise to aid him with all my power the day he may claim my assistance, for whatever it may be, wherever it may, and against whom it may be."

"Oh! seigneurs! seigneurs!" exclaimed Mauléon, "you overwhelm me with joy and pride. Two powerful princes to treat me thus! Why, you represent for me, on this earth, God himself; you open heaven to me!"

"You are worthy of it, Mauléon," said the constable; "are you in want of money?"

"No! seigneur, no!"

"The plan you meditate will, however, cost you some expenses; who knows?—bribes!"

"Seigneurs," replied Mauléon, "remember that I one day took the chest of that brigand Caverley: it contained the fortune of a king; it was too much, I lost it without regret. Since then, in France, I have received from the king a hundred livres, which is a treasure equally great, since it suffices for me."

"How well spoken!" murmured Musaron from his corner, and the tears in his eyes.

The prince heard him. "'Tis your squire?" he said.

"A brave and faithful follower," replied Mauléon, "who renders my life supportable, after having more than once saved it."

"He shall be also rewarded. There, squire," said the king, detaching from his robe one of the shells embroidered on the stuff, "take this, and the day you require anything, you or yours, whatever generation it may, this shell, delivered into my hands, or in those of one of my descendants, shall be worth a fortune; go, good squire, go."

Musaron knelt, his heart inflated, as if ready to burst.

"Now sire," said the constable, "let us profit by the night to reach the spot where your officers await you; we did wrong to let that Caverley free, he is capable of returning upon us with tripled forces, and taking us in earnest, were it only to prove to us that he has a spirit."

"To horse, then," said the prince.

They armed themselves, and trusting to their courage and their strength, they reached a wood, where it became difficult to attack—impossible to

follow them. Agénor then dismounted and took leave of his two powerful protectors who wished him good luck and a successful journey.

Musaron awaited the orders to direct the horses towards one of the four cardinal points:—"Where are we going?" he said.

"To Montiel; my hatred tells me that, sooner or later, we shall find Don Pedro there."

"*Au fait*," said Musaron, "jealousy is good for something; it sees more things than there are. Well! to Montiel, then."

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE CAVERN OF MONTIEL.

AND they departed rapidly. Agénor attained in two days the object of his mission and of his love. He arrived before Montiel, assisted by Musaron, with such precautions, that no one could flatter themselves with having seen him in the country. But, by force of taking these precautions, they had dispensed with the advantage of information—who does not speak, can never learn.

When Musaron saw Montiel, seated like a giant of granite on a foundation of rock, and lifting its head to the skies, whilst its feet seemed to bathe in the Tagus; when he had contemplated, by the light of the moon, the winding paths bristling with rock, the steps, cut in sharp angles, in such a way that, in ascending, one could not see twenty paces in advance, whilst, from the summit, the least sentinel could see every one mount, Musaron said to his master:—"Tis a real vulture's nest, my dear master, and, if the dove is shut up there, we shall never be enabled to take it."

In fact, Montiel was impregnable otherwise than by famine; and two men are not capable of investing a place of strength.

"What is important to know," said Agénor, "is whether Mothril inhabits this den with Aïssa; the condition of Aïssa in the midst of our enemies; it is, in a word, the conduct of Don Pedro in the whole of this affair."

"We shall know it by patience," replied Musaron; "but we have only four days to be patient; reflect upon this, seigneur."

"I shall wait until I have seen Aïssa, or someone who can speak to me of her."

"Tis a complete hunt; but consider well, my master, whilst we are hunting in this chateau, a Mothril—a Hafiz—somewhere will send us from above a ball or an arrow that will nail us like frogs to the rock; the position is well chosen, really."

"It's true."

"We must, therefore, use more ingenious means than usual: as to believing that Donna Aïssa is in this den, I do believe it; I should doubt, knowing Mothril, that he had shut her up in it. As to knowing whether Don Pedro is there, I think that, by waiting a couple of days, we shall make the discovery."

"Why?"

"Because the chateau is small, contains few provisions, cannot hold a garrison, and that, to renew the provisions necessary for so great a king, they must often leave it."

"But where shall we lodge ourselves?"

"We will not go far; I see from hence our affair."

"This cavern?"

"Is a crevice in the rock; a spring rises from it; 'tis humid, but 'tis retired. No one comes

here unless to drink or seek for water; we shall be hidden inside it, and we will catch the first that comes, and make him speak by promises or threats; in the meantime, we shall be at no expense."

"You are a brave and judicious companion, my Musaron."

"Oh! believe me, the king, Don Pedro, has not many councillors of my stamp. Do you accept the cavern?"

"You forget two things; our living, which we shall not find in this cavern, and our horses who will not enter it."

"It's true, we don't think of everything; I found the commencement, you find the end."

"We will kill our horses and throw them into the Tagus below us."

"Yes; but what shall we eat?"

"We will allow the person who goes for the provisions to depart, and, when he returns, we will attack him, and obtain provisions."

"Admirable!" said Musaron; "but those in the chateau, not finding their purveyor return, will suspect something."

"What matter, if we get the information we require."

It was decided that the two plans should be followed; at the same time, at the moment of killing his horse with his mace, Agénor found his heart fail:—"Poor beast!" he said, "who has so well served me!"

"And who," added Musaron, "might yet still further serve us in case you should carry off Aïssa from hence."

"You speak like an oracle; I will not kill my poor horse; go, Musaron, unbridle him, conceal the harness and equipment in the grotto; the animal may wander about without being known; he will easily find a living, more industrious in that way than man; if he is seen, which is the worst that can happen, and to us as well, they will take him to the chateau; now, we shall still be in a condition to defend him, eh?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

Musaron unfastened the horse, took off the harness and hid it in the grotto, the floor of which was of hard clay, over which, for greater salubrity, the good squire sprinkled some sand brought in his cloak from the banks of the Tagus and some chopped heath. The night was consumed in these labours. Daybreak found our two adventurers in the deepest recess of their solitary asylum. A singular phenomenon struck their ears. By the sort of winding staircase, which from the base of the hill ascended to the summit of the chateau, they heard the voices of men walking on the platform. The voice, instead of simply ascending, as is the case, reverberated by whirling round the partitions of this pipe or winding flight of steps, and again sprung up like the noise from the funnel of a water spout. It resulted from this, that Agénor, from the recesses of his den, could hear a conversation at more than three hundred feet above his head. The first fortification was situated above the cistern. As far as this any one could arrive freely; but the country was so deserted and laid waste that, except the people of the chateau, none ventured into this labyrinth.

Agénor and Musaron passed sorrowfully half their first day. They drank water, for they were very thirsty, but they could eat nothing, although their hunger was as great. Towards evening two Moors descended from the chateau. They brought a donkey to carry the provisions they calculated upon obtaining at the neighbouring hamlet, about

a league distant. At the same time four slaves came from the hamlet with jars, for the purpose of filling them at the fountain. A conversation commenced between the Moors of the chateau and the slaves; but the dialect was so barbarous, that our two adventurers could not understand a word of it. The Moors left for the hamlet with the slaves, and returned two hours afterwards. Hunger is a bad counsellor. Musaron was for unmercifully killing the poor devils, throwing them into the river, and seizing the provisions.

"It would be a cowardly murder that would interfere in the sight of God with the success of our plan," said Agénor; "I have another stratagem," he said; "see how narrow the road is, and how black the night is. The ass with his panniers will have much difficulty to walk in the path along the rock. We have only to push him as he passes, he will roll to the bottom of the hill. Then in the night we will pick up what there remains in the way of provisions on the ground."

"It's true, and like a charitable christian, mon-seigneur," replied Musaron; "but I was so hungry, that I had no mercy left."

As they said, so they performed, the four hands of the two adventurers gave so rough a shock to the little donkey when he passed, rubbing against the rock, that he slipped and fell on the steep declivity. The Moors uttered cries of rage and beat the poor animal, but had they repaired the damage they could not fill the empty panniers. They returned, therefore, disconsolately, the one to the hamlet with the wounded donkey, the other to the chateau with his lamentations. Our two hungry ones, however, rushed bravely amongst the briars and rocks and collected the bread, dry raisins, and leather bottles. They had at one blow obtained provisions for a week. With such a copious repast, they recovered hope and courage; and, let us admit, they had need of it. In fact, for two other mortal days our vigilant sentinels observed nothing, heard nothing but the voice of Hafiz, who roamed about the platform lamenting his service, or the voice of Mothrill giving orders, and the exercises of the soldiers; nothing announced that the king was at Montiel.

Musaron had the courage to issue forth at night into the neighbouring hamlet to pick up any information; no one could reply to him. Agénor questioned on his side, he obtained not the slightest addition. When we begin to despair, time seems to double its flight. The position of our two spies was critical; in the day time they dared not show themselves; at night they dared not leave, because during their absence some one might enter, and this some one might be the king. But when two days and a half had elapsed, Agénor was the first to lose courage. In the night of this second day, Mauléon returned from the hamlet, where he had emptied his purse without learning anything. He found Musaron in despair in the cavern, and tearing off his hair by handfuls, though he had but little. On questioning the honest squire, he learnt from him that, tired of resting alone in the grotto, he had fallen asleep; that during his sleep, something like a horseman had ascended to the chateau without Musaron having seen him; he had only heard the iron shoes of the horse or the mule.

"Shall we be unlucky?" exclaimed the squire.

"Do not despair—it cannot be the king. The people at the village know him to be at Toledo. Besides, he does not journey alone, and the noise of his suite would have awakened you. No, it is not the king; he will not come to Montiel. In-

stead of losing our time here, let us go straight to Toledo."

"You are right, my master, we have here no other good chance to hope for than to hear the voice of Donna Aïssa. 'Tis very gracious, but the song of the bird is not the bird, as they say at Bearn."

"Let us execute quickly, Musaron; collect the harness of the horses; let us depart hence and *en route*."

"I shall not be long at the work, Sire Chevalier; you cannot think how weary I am of this cavern."

"Come," said Agénor; at the same moment, and as he rose up:—"Chut!" he said to Musaron.

"What is it?"

"Silence, I tell you; I hear some one walking."

Agénor re-entered the grotto, and Musaron was so alarmed at the noise, that he drew his master towards him by the sleeve. In fact they distinguished hasty steps in the path that led to the chateau. The night was dark, the two Frenchmen hid themselves at the extremity of the cavern. Presently three men appeared in sight; they walked cautiously, and stooped under a *madronio* that they might not be seen from the citadel. Arrived within three paces of the spring, they stopped. They wore the costume of peasants, but all three had a hatchet and a knife.

"Certainly," said one of them, "he followed this path, here are the prints of his horse's shoes on the sand."

"Then we have lost him," said another, with a sigh. "By the devil! we have been unfortunate lately."

"You fly at too high game," added the first.

"Lesby, you reason like a blockhead; the captain will tell you so."

"But——"

"Be silent—a fat buck killed, will feed the hunter a fortnight. A dozen larks or a hare scarcely afford a meal."

"Yes, but the lark or the hare is caught—rarely the deer or the wild boar."

"The fact is, we made a sad mess of it the other day, eh, captain?"

The one thus designated uttered a deep sigh. It was his only reply.

"And then," continued the obstinate Lesby, "why change every moment the track and the prey? Let us stick to one and take him."

"Did you take him at the *venta* the other night—the one we followed from Bordeaux?"

"Hem!" said Musaron, in the ear of his master.

"Chut!" replied Mauléon, his ear on the ground.

The man, whom his companions called captain, now drew himself up, and in an imperious voice:—"Be silent, both of you," he said; "comment not on my orders. What have I promised you? ten thousand florins each. Provided you are paid them, what do you demand?"

"Nothing, captain, nothing."

"Henry de Transtamara is worth a hundred thousand florins to Don Pedro; Don Pedro is worth as much to Henry de Transtamara. I thought myself able to take the one, I was deceived, I nearly left my skin in the lion's den, you were witnesses of it. Well! as the lion saved my life, I ought from gratitude to take his enemy. I will take him. I will not deliver him to Don Henry for nothing, it's true; but I will sell him, 'tis all one, provided he has him. In this way we shall be all satisfied."

A grunt of satisfaction was the reply of the two myrmidons of this man.

"Why, God pardon me, 'tis that Caverley that I have there within reach of my hand," whispered Musaron into his master's ear.

"Silence!" repeated Mauléon.

Caverley, for it was really him, thus finished his profession of faith:—"Don Pedro has quitted Toledo, he is in this chateau. He is very brave, and as a measure of prudence he has made the journey alone. In fact, a man by himself is never remarked."

"No," said Lesby; "but is taken."

"Ah! faith! we don't foresee all," replied Caverley. "Now let us arrange our plan; you, Lesby, will rejoin Philipps, who holds the horses; you, Becker, will remain here with me. The king will not leave the chateau later than to-morrow, because he is expected at Toledo: we know it."

"Well!" said Becker.

"When he passes, we will intercept him. He must distrust one thing."

"Which?"

"Why that he has not given orders to his Toledan cavaliers to come and meet him; we ought, therefore, to arrange matters here. Come, Lesby, you, who are a noted foxhunter, find us a good kennel in these rocks, we will hide ourselves in it."

"Captain, I hear water handy, 'tis some spring, the springs generally cause a hole in the rock, you ought to find a cave about here."

"Ah, ça! Why we are lost; they will enter here," said Musaron, to whose lips Agénor applied his hand by way of a gag.

"Stay," said Lesby, "the grotto is there."

"Very well," said Caverley. "Leave us, Lesby; go and rejoin Philipps, and let the horses be near here at daybreak."

Lesby disappeared, Caverley and Becker remained alone. "See what it is to have imagination," said the bandit to his companion. "I look like a land pirate, and I am the only politician who comprehends the situation. Two men dispute for a throne; let one be suppressed, the war is over; so that, acting as I do, I act like a christian, a philosopher; I spare the blood of men; I am virtuous, Becker, I am virtuous!" and the bandit set up a laugh, endeavouring to stifle his voice. "Come," said he, at length, "let us enter the hole, follow me if you can, Becker, 'tis hide and seek."

CHAPTER LXVII.

HOW CAVERLEY LOST HIS PURSE AND AGENOR HIS SWORD.

THE disposition of the cave was thus:—First, the spring, a crystal liquid falling from a vault of stone on the pebbles, in the middle of which it had dug a bed for itself; next, further in, a winding cave, to which you arrived by two natural steps. This cavern was dark in the day, and it needed the cunning of the fox to have discovered it at night.

Caverley avoided the perpendicular dropping of the spring, and feeling his way, clambered up the steps. Becker, more ingenious, or more friendly to comfort, advanced towards the extremity to find warmth and shelter.

Agénor and Musaron heard them, felt them, almost saw them.

Becker finished by placing himself, and he invited Caverley to do the same, saying to him:—"Come, captain, here is room for two."

Caverley allowed himself to be persuaded, and entered. But, as he did not walk without difficulty, he repeated, evidently in bad humour:—"Room for two, 'tis very easy to say so," and he stretched out his hands to prevent knocking his head against the stony vault or the rocky partitions. But, unluckily he encountered the leg of Musaron, and seized it, crying out to Becker:—"Becker, a body!"

"No, by God!" exclaimed the valiant Musaron, squeezing his throat, "'tis a real living man, who will strangle you, my brave one." Caverley, thrown back, *floored*, could not add a word; Musaron held him by the wrists and bound them with the girth of one of the horses.

Agénor had only to extend his hand to do the same with Becker, half dead with superstitious terror.

"Now," said Musaron, "my dear captain, we will talk about ransom. Pay attention that we are many, that the slightest gesture or the least cry will draw on your body an infinite number of thrusts with a dagger."

"I won't budge an inch, I won't speak a word," murmured Caverley; "but spare me!"

"We must first of all take our precautions," said Musaron, depriving Caverley, piece by piece, of his weapons, offensive and defensive, with the dexterity of a monkey peeling a walnut. This affair terminated, he did the same to Becker. The weapons taken off, he passed to the *escarcelle*, or large purse. His fingers alone showed any delicacy in this operation; his conscience offered no scruple; belts well garnished, purses well filled, passed into the power of Musaron.

"You rifle too! you!" said Agénor to him.

"Sir, I take from them the means of injury."

The first moment of fear having passed, Caverley demanded permission to offer a few observations.

"You may," said Agénor, "if you speak low."

"Who are you?" said Caverley.

"Ah! that is a question, my dear," replied Musaron, "we shall not reply to it."

"You have heard the whole of my conversation with these men."

"Without losing a single word."

"The devil! you know my plan, then?"

"Like yourself."

"Well, what will you do with me and my companion, Becker?"

"'Tis very simple, we are in the service of Don Pedro, we shall give you up to Don Pedro, narrating what we know as to your intentions respecting him."

"'Tis not charitable," replied Caverley, who turned pale in the darkness. "Don Pedro is cruel; he will make me suffer a thousand tortures; kill me at once, with one blow at my heart."

"We do not assassinate," said Mauléon.

"Yes, but Don Pedro will assassinate me." And a long silence of his captors informed Caverley that he had persuaded them, since they found no reply for him. Agénor consulted. The unexpected appearance of Caverley had revealed to him the presence of Don Pedro at Montiel. This man had been the hound with unfailing scent that puts up the game for his master. This service rendered to Mauléon appeared to him important enough to urge him to clemency. Besides, his enemy was disarmed, rifled, deprived of the means of injuring. All these reflections were also made by Musaron. He was so accustomed to the thoughts of his master, that the same inspiration simultaneously rose up in their two minds. But

Caverley had made use of this silence, like a cunning and expert man as he was; he had reflected that since the commencement of the disagreeable conversation he had had with the strangers, two voices alone had spoken; by feeling about and turning himself round, he was convinced that the cave was narrow and incapable, in size, of holding more than four men. With the exception of weapons, therefore, the party was equal; but to obtain these arms he required the liberty of his hands, and his hands were tied. That mysterious providence that protects villains, and which is no other than the weakness of honest men—this providence, we say, came to the assistance of Caverley. "This Caverley," said Agénor to himself, "will greatly incommode me. In my place he would rid himself of the embarrassment by a thrust with a poignard, and throw my body into the Tagus; this is a step I would not employ. He will incommode me, I say, when I wish to leave this, and I should wish to leave it as soon as I have news of Aïssa and Don Pedro." This reflection once made, Mauléon, who was expeditious, seized Caverley by the arm, and began untying him, saying:—"Master Caverley, you have, unknowingly, rendered me a service; yes, Don Pedro would kill you, and I would not that you should die thus, when there are so many handsome gibbets in England and France." At each word the imprudent man untied a knot; "I give you liberty, therefore," continued Mauléon, "profit by it to fly and endeavour to correct yourself." Upon which he finished untying the girth.

Scarcely had Caverley his arms free, when falling upon Agénor, he attempted to seize his long sword, saying, "With liberty, restore me my purse!"

Already he held the steel—he fitted the guard to his hand to strike, when Mauléon struck him with his fist, which sent him rolling into the piece of water near the steps of the cave. Caverley like a fish, who escapes from the fisherman's basket, again smells the ambient element in which he lives, breathed the air with delight, bounded out of the cavern, and ran with all haste towards the hamlet.

"By Saint James! my master," said Musaron, in a fury, "you have done a good job there; let me run and overtake him."

"Eh! what to do?" said Agénor, "since I wished him to have a clear stage?"

"Madness—downright madness! the scoundrel will play us some trick; he will return—he will speak."

"Hold your tongue, simpleton," said Agénor, pushing the elbow of Musaron, that the latter, in his passion, might not commit himself before Becker; if he returns, we will deliver him to Don Pedro, whom we will apprize this very night."

"That's different," grumbled Musaron, who understood the *rusé*.

"Come, friend, untie the bonds of this honest M. Becker, and tell him that if Caverley, Lesby, Philipps, and Becker, those four illustrious cavaliers, are still in the neighbourhood to-morrow, they shall be all hung from the battlements of Montiel; for, in these parts, the police is better managed than in France."

"Oh! I shall not forget that, seigneurs," said Becker, drunk with joy and gratitude.

This one never dreamt of turning against his benefactors. He kissed their hands and disappeared as rapid as a bird.

"Oh! my master," sighed Musaron, "what adventures!"

"Oh! sir squire," said Agénor, "what lessons you have to take before being accomplished! What! you do not see that this Caverley has unkennelled Don Pedro for us; that, not knowing who we are, he will think we are the keepers of Don Pedro; that, consequently, he will quit the country all the quicker? Besides, what more could you do? you have the money and the arms."

"Sir, I was wrong."

"Undoubtedly!"

"But let us watch, sir; let us watch. The devil and Caverley are very intimate."

"A hundred men would not force us in this cave. We can sleep here alternately," replied Mauléon, "and thus wait for news from my dear mistress, since heaven has already sent us news of Don Pedro."

"Sir, I no longer despair of anything, and if any one said to me:—'The Senora Aïssa will come down and visit you in this snake's nest,' I should believe it, and would say, 'Thanks for your news, brave man.'" At this moment a light distant sound, but measured and cadenced, struck the practised ear of Musaron. "My faith," said he, you were right; there is that Caverley at a gallop. I hear four horses, I'll swear. He has rejoined his English, and they are all flying the gibbet which you seasoned them with—unless they come here. No, the sound recedes, it dies away; a prosperous journey—adieu, until next time, captain of the devil!"

"Eh! Musaron," exclaimed Mauléon, suddenly, "I have lost my sword!"

"The scamp has robbed you of it," said Musaron; "'tis a pity, such a good blade!"

"With my name engraved on the handle. Ah! Musaron, the brigand will recognize me!"

"Not before the evening, Seigneur Knight; and by the evening he will be far enough, believe me, that damned Caverley, he must always steal something."

The next morning, at daybreak, they heard, descending from the chateau, two men, who conversed earnestly; it was Mothril himself, and the king, Don Pedro; the latter was leading his horse. At this sight, Agénor's blood boiled. He was about to rush upon his enemies, to poignard them and terminate the struggle, but Musaron arrested him:—"Are you mad, seigneur?" he said; "what! you would kill Mothril before seeing Aïssa? And, what tells you that, as at Navarrete, those who guard Aïssa have not orders to kill her if Mothril died, or you made him a prisoner?"

Agénor trembled:—"Oh! you really love me," he said, "yes, you love me."

"I believe it, by the mass! you fancy that I should not be pleased to kill this villainous Moor, who has done so much harm? yes, I will kill him, but at the proper time, and may it be a good one!"

They saw pass, within reach of their arm, these two objects of their legitimate hatred, and they were almost touched by them, without daring to lay a hand on them:—"Fortune trifles with us!" exclaimed Agénor.

"Do you complain, then, seigneur," said Musaron, "you who, without Caverley, would have left yesterday—left, without knowing where Don Pedro was, without having news of Donna Aïssa; but, chut! let us listen to them."

"Thanks," said Don Pedro to his minister, "I think she will recover, and will love me."

"Do not doubt it, seigneur; she will recover, because Hafiz and myself will gather, according

to the prescribed ritual, the herbs you are aware of; she will then love you, because nothing will then displease her at your court. But let us talk of serious matters; prove that the news is certain, ten thousand of my countrymen should be landed at Lisbon, and ascend the Tagus as far as Toledo; go to Toledo, where you are loved; encourage these faithful defenders. The day on which Henry enters Spain, we will take him at a single blow, him and his army, between the town he besieges and the Saracen army, your allies, at the head of which I will place myself when it is in sight of Toledo; the real, true, and infallible success is contained in this."

"Mothril, you are a clever minister; whatever happens, you have been devoted to me."

"What an ugly figure the Moor must make to appear gracious!" said Musaron, in his master's ears.

"Before I quit you to return to the chateau," said Mothril, "a last advice; refuse the Prince of Wales any payment of money, until he has sided with you; these English are perfidious."

"Yes; and besides, the money fails."

"The greater reason. Adieu! seigneur, you are henceforth victorious and happy."

"Adieu! Mothril."

"Adieu! seigneur."

The two adventurers were still to undergo the punishment of seeing Mothril slowly remount, who, with an infernal smile on his lips, regained the chateau, so ardently coveted by Agénor:—"Let us mount with him," said the young man, "let us seize him alive; let us say that, if he does not deliver Aïssa to us, we will kill him; he will yield her."

"Yes, and on our road, when we descend, he will smash us with pieces of rock; we shall be much advanced. Patience, I tell you; God is good!"

"Well! since you refuse all for Mothril, do not, at least, refuse the opportunity that offers for Don Pedro; he goes alone, we are two, let us take him, and slay him if he resists; or, if he does not resist, let us carry him to Don Henry de Transtamara, to prove that we have found him."

"Excellent idea! I adopt it;" exclaimed Musaron; "I follow you."

They waited until Mothril had reached the platform of the chateau, they then ventured to leave their hole. But when they plunged their regards over the plain, they saw Don Pedro at the head of a troop of at least forty men-at-arms. He pursued his route peaceably towards Toledo:—"Ah! by the mass, we were very stupid; pardon, seigneur, very credulous," said Musaron, "Mothril would not have allowed the king to depart thus alone; the guards came from the hamlet to meet him."

"Apprised by whom?"

"Eh! by the Moors last night, or, even by a signal from the chateau."

"Very just; let us only think of seeing Aïssa, if possible, or of returning to Don Henry."

CHAPTER LXVIII.

HAFIZ.

THE opportunity hoped for, did not present itself for a whole day. No one left the chateau, except the purveyors. A messenger also arrived; but the horn of the warder had signaled his arrival; our adventurers did not think it prudent to stop him.

Towards the evening, when all became silent,

when the sounds that ascend from the river to the mountain seemed themselves appeased, softened; when the sky, paled in the horizon, and the rock appeared less fresh, our two friends heard an animated conversation between two well-known voices. Mothril and Hafiz were quarrelling whilst descending from the platform of the chateau towards the path that led to the doors:—"Master" said Hafiz, "you shut me up when the king was here, you promised to present me to him; you also promised me plenty of money. I am weary of being with this young girl, whom you force me to guard; I wish to be in the war with our countrymen who are returning from the country, and ascend the Tagus at this moment in the vessels with white sails; so pay me at once, master, and let me go to the king."

"You wish to quit me, my son?" said Mothril, "am I a bad master to you?"

"No; but I will have no master at all."

"I can retain you," said Mothril, "for I love you."

"But I do not love you; you have made me commit some base actions that people my sleep with frightful dreams; I am too young to determine to live thus; pay me, and let me go free, or I will find some one to whom I will tell the whole."

"Then you are right," replied Mothril, "remount to the chateau, I will pay you immediately."

As they descended, Hafiz was behind Mothril; the path was so narrow that, to remount, Hafiz was necessarily before, and Mothril behind. The owl commenced his mournful cry amongst the hollows of the rock, a frightful blasphemy pierced the air, and something heavy, faint, and bloody, dropped, almost flattened, before the cavern where our two friends were attentively listening. They replied by a cry of terror to the cry of death. The night birds fled bewildered from the bosom of the creviced rocks, and the very insects hurriedly escaped from their nests. Presently, a stream of blood reached the water of the cistern, which it reddened. Agénor, pale and trembling, looked out of his hiding place, and the livid head of Musaron placed itself by the side of his master's:—"Hafiz!" they both exclaimed, on perceiving, about three paces distant, the motionless body, in pieces, of the companion of Gildaz. "Poor boy!" murmured Musaron, who left his hole to aid him, if it were yet time. Already had the shadows of death invaded his bronzed face; his eyes dilated beyond measure, were lustreless: a heavy breathing, mixed with blood, arrived painfully from the crushed chest of the Moor. He recognized Musaron, he recognized Agénor, and his features wore an expression of superstitious terror. In fact, the miserable youth fancied he beheld his avenging spectres. Musaron raised his head; Agénor brought him some fresh water to bathe his face and wounds:—"The Frenchman! the Frenchman!" said Hafiz, drinking greedily; "Allah! pardon me!"

"Come with us, poor lad; we will recover you," said Agénor.

"No, I am dead—dead, like Gildaz," murmured the Saracen, "dead, as I have deserved, dead by assassination; Mothril has thrown me from the top of the battlement of the chateau."

A movement of horror, escaped from Mauleon, was noticed by the dying boy:—"Frenchman!" he said, "I have hated you; but I cease hating you to-day, for you can avenge me. Donna Aïssa still loves you; Donna Maria also protected you. 'Twas Mothril who poisoned Maria; 'twas he who took advantage of the swoon of Aïssa to strike her with a poignard; say this to the king



Don Pedro, tell it to him quickly; but, save Aïssa, if you love her, for, in fifteen days, when Don Pedro returns to the chateau, Mothril is to deliver to him Aïssa, drugged by a potent drink. I have done you injury, but I do you a service; pardon me, and avenge me; Allah!" He fell back exhausted, turned his eyes with a painful effort towards the chateau to curse it, and expired.

For more than a quarter of an hour, the two friends could not succeed in collecting their ideas, or recovering their *sang froid*. This hideous death, this revelation, these future menaces, had struck them with inexpressible terror. Agénor was the first to rise: - "For a fortnight hence," he said, "we are at rest; in a fortnight, Don Pedro, Mothril, or I, will be dead. Come, Musaron, let us go to the camp of Henry, to render him an account of the mission I undertook. But let us hasten; seek our horses in the plain."

Musaron, bewildered, succeeded in finding the

horses, who, indeed, came at his call. He equipped them, loaded them, and, jumping lightly into the saddle, he took the road to Toledo, on which his master had already preceded him.

When they reached the plain, and the sinister chateau stood up in bold relief, like a black mass against the grey blue sky:—"Mothril!" cried Agénor, in an echoing voice, pointing with his fist to the windows of the castle; "Mothril, to a speedy meeting! My love, I return!"

CHAPTER LXIX.

PREPARATIONS.

POWDER does not take fire with more rapidity, than revolt in the states of Don Pedro. Without the fear of being invaded by the neighbouring kingdoms, the inhabitants of Castile had, for the most part, pronounced in favour of Henry, as soon

as a manifesto emanating from him informed Spain that he had returned with an army, and that this army was commanded by the Constable Bertrand Duguesclin. In a few days, the roads were covered with soldiers of fortune, with devoted citizens, with religions of every order, and with Bretons, marching towards Toledo. But Toledo, faithful to Don Pedro, as Bertrand had foreseen, shut its gates, armed its walls, and awaited the event. Henry lost no time; he invested the town, and commenced a regular siege. This state of hostility served him admirably, for it gave time to his allies to rally under his standard.

On the other side, Don Pedro multiplied himself; he sent courier upon courier to the king of Grenada, the king of Portugal, the king of Arragon and Navarre, his ancient friends. He negotiated with the Prince of Wales, who, ill at Bordeaux, seemed to have lost a little of his energy for war, and was preparing himself, by repose, for that cruel death which carried him off so young to a glorious eternity. The Saracens, announced by Mothril, were landed at Lisbon; they had taken a few days of rest, then, with the boats furnished them by the king of Portugal, they ascended the Tagus, preceded by three thousand horses sent to Don Pedro, on the part of his ally of Portugal. Henry had with him the towns of Galicia and Leon, an homogeneous army, of which five thousand Bretons, commanded by Oliver Duguesclin, formed the powerful nucleus. He only waited for certain news from Mauléon, when the latter returned to the camp with his squire, and related what he had seen, and what he had done. The prince and Bertrand listened in profound silence.

"What!" said the constable, "Mothril is not gone with Don Pedro?"

"He awaits the arrival of the Saracens, to put himself at their head."

"We can send a hundred men to take him beforehand, at Montiel," said Bertrand, "Agénor shall command the expedition, and, as I suppose he has no very strong reasons for loving this Mothril, he will erect a tall gibbet on the banks of the Tagus, and hang to this gibbet the Saracen, the assassin, the traitor."

"Seigneur, seigneur," said Agénor, "you were kind enough to promise me your friendship, to promise me your assistance. Do not refuse me to-day; suffer, I entreat you, the Saracen Mothril to live calm, and without suspicion, in his chateau at Montiel."

"For what reason? 'tis a nest we must destroy."

"Seigneur Constable, 'tis a den, that I know, and which will prove useful to you at another time. You know that when we wish to force the fox, we do not appear to notice his kennel, and pass before it without regarding it; otherwise, he quits it, and does not return."

"Well? chevalier."

"Seigneur, let Mothril and Don Pedro believe themselves unnoticed, and inviolable in the chateau of Montiel; who knows if we shall not take them by and bye at a single throw of the net?"

"Agénor," said the king, "this is not your only reason."

"No, sire, and I have never uttered a falsehood; no, this is not my only reason. The true one is, that this chateau contains a friend of mine, a friend whom Mothril would despatch if he is pressed too close."

"Speak, then!" exclaimed Bertrand, "and never fear that we shall hesitate to grant what you desire."

After this conversation, which assured Mauléon as to the fate of Aïssa; the chiefs of the army vigorously pressed the siege of Toledo. The inhabitants defended themselves so well, that it was the focus of many feats of arms, and many of the illustrious besiegers, amongst the expert, were killed or wounded in the skirmishes or sorties. But these combats, without results, were only the prelude to a general action, as the lightning and shock of clouds is the prelude of the tempest.

CHAPTER LXX.

DON PEDRO had regulated in Toledo, a town of some defence, and numerous resources, all his affairs with his subjects and allies. The Toledans had floated from one party to another in this interminable suite of civil wars; it was necessary to strike them a moral blow that would bind them for ever to the cause of the conqueror of Navarrete. Here was the best title of Don Pedro; in fact, if the Toledans did not support their prince this time, and that in the first battle he was not a conqueror, as at Navarrete, there was an end of Toledo for ever, Don Pedro would never forgive it. This cunning man knew well that the population of a large town has no real impulse but hunger and avidity. Mothril repeated it to him daily. It was necessary then to feed the Toledans, and to let them hope for rich spoils. Don Pedro did not succeed in attaining the two results. He promised much for the future, but he performed nothing for the present. When the Toledans perceived that provisions failed in the market, that the granaries were empty, they began to murmur. A league of twenty rich individuals, devoted to the Count de Transtamara, or simply animated with a spirit of opposition, fomented these murmurs and evil dispositions of the town. Don Pedro consulted Mothril.

"These people," replied the Moor, "will play you the handsome trick of opening, whilst you are asleep, one of the gates of your town to your competitor. Ten thousand men will enter, will take you, and the war will be finished."

"What is to be done, then?"

"A very simple thing. In Spain they call you Don Pedro the Cruel."

"I know it, and I only merit this title by some acts of justice a little energetic."

"I do not dispute it; but, if you have deserved this name, you must not fear to merit it again, if you have not merited it, hasten to justify it by some grand execution, that will teach the Toledans the strength of your arm."

"Be it so," replied the king. "I will act this very night." In fact, Don Pedro had the ill-disposed of whom we have spoken pointed out; he informed himself of their residences and their habits, and on this same night, with a hundred soldiers, whom he commanded in person, he forced the house of each of these factious, and had them assassinated. Their bodies were thrown into the Tagus. A little nocturnal noise, much blood carefully washed away, this taught the Toledans what the king understood by practising justice and administering the town. They did not murmur, therefore, and set about eating, with great enthusiasm, in the first place their horses. The king congratulated them upon it:—"You do not require horses in the town," he said; "the journeys are not long; as to the sorties on the besiegers, why, we will make them on foot." After their horses, the Toledans were compelled

to eat their mules. For Spaniards this is a cruel necessity; the mule is a national animal, they regard it almost as a compatriot. Certainly they sacrifice their horses to the *corredas de toros*; but they charge the mules to collect in the arena the horses and bulls killed by each other. The Toledans then eat their mules with a sigh.

Henry de Transtamara let them alone.

This execution of the mules raised the energy of the besieged; they made a *sortie* to obtain provisions; but the Bègue de Vilaines and Oliver de Mauny, who had not eaten their Breton horses, beat them cruelly, and they were forced to remain in the ramparts. Don Pedro suggested to them a novel idea; this was to eat the fodder, which the horses and mules no longer eat, as they were dead. This lasted a week, after which, they had to think of something else. The circumstance was not very advantageous.

The Prince of Wales, wearied at not receiving the sums of money which Don Pedro owed him, sent three deputies to Toledo to present the note of the expenses of the war.

Don Pedro consulted Mothril upon this fresh embarrassment.

"The christians," replied Mothril, "are very fond of ceremonial splendours and public *fêtes*; at the time we had bulls, I should have advised you to give them a brilliant bull-fight, but there are none left, we must think of something equivalent."

"Speak, speak."

"These deputies are come to ask you for money. All Toledo waits your reply; if you refuse, 'tis that your chests are empty; in that case count no longer on anything."

"But I cannot pay, we have nothing left."

"I know it well, seigneur, I who administer your finances; at the same time, in default of money, we must have imagination. You will invite the deputies to repair in great pomp to the cathedral; there, in presence of all the people, who will be greatly delighted to see your royal habits, the gold and precious stones of the sacerdotal ornaments, the richness of the armour, and the hundred and fifty horses that remain in the town as samples of curious animals, whose race is extinct; there, I tell you, you will say:—'Seigneur Deputies, have you full powers to treat with me?'—'Yes,' they will say, 'we represent His Highness the Prince of Wales, our gracious seigneur.' 'Well!' you will say, 'you are come to demand of me the sum of money which it has been agreed I am to pay?'—'Yes,' they will reply. 'I do not dispute the debt,' you will say, my prince. 'But it was agreed between his highness and myself, that in return for the sum due, I should have the protection, the alliance, and the co-operation of the English.'"

"But I have had it!" exclaimed Don Pedro.

"Yes, but you have it not, and you risk having the contrary. This, therefore, you must obtain from them above all, neutrality; seeing that if, with the army, Henry de Transtamara, and the Bretons, commanded by the constable, you have to fight your cousin the Prince of Wales and twenty thousand English, you are lost my prince, and the English will pay themselves with their own hands with your spoils."

"They will refuse me, Mothril, because I shall not pay them."

"If they intended to refuse, it would be already done; but the christians are too proud to avow to each other that they have been deceived. The Prince of Wales would rather lose all that you owe him, and pass for having been paid, than to

be paid without its being known. Let me finish. Your deputies will summon you to pay them. You will reply:—'From all parts I am threatened with the hostilities of the Prince of Wales. If this be so, I would prefer losing my whole kingdom than allow to subsist a trace of alliance with so disloyal a prince. Swear to me, then, that for two months hence his highness will keep, not the promise he has made to assist me, but that which was made previously, of remaining neuter, and in two months, I swear on the Holy Evangelist, here you shall be paid; I hold the money quite ready.' The deputies will swear, that they might be enabled to return quickly to their own country; your people will then be joyful, comforted, sure of having no more fresh enemies, and after having eaten their horses and mules, they will eat all the rats and lizards of Toledo, which are in such great numbers on account of the neighbourhood of the rocks and the river."

"But in two months, Mothril?"

"You will not pay, it's true; but you will have gained or lost the battle we are about to engage in; in two months you will no longer have occasion, conqueror or conquered, to pay your debts; conqueror, because you will have more credit than you want; conquered because you will be worse than insolvent."

"But my oath on the bible?"

"You have often spoken of turning mahometan, this will be an opportunity, my prince. Devoted to Mahomet, you will not have to trouble yourself about Jesus Christ, the other prophet."

"Execrable heathen!" murmured Don Pedro; "what counsel!"

"I do not deny it," replied Mothril; "but your faithful christians give none at all; mine is, therefore, the best."

Don Pedro, after having well reflected, executed, from end to end, Mothril's plan. The ceremony was imposing, the Toledans forgot their hunger at sight of the magnificences of the court, and the preparations of warlike pomp. Don Pedro displayed so much magnanimity, made such an elegant discourse, and swore so solemnly, that the deputies, after swearing to the neutrality, appeared more happy than if they had received the money down.

"What matter, after all," said Don Pedro, "it will last as long as I shall."

He had greater luck than he expected, for according to the anticipations of Mothril, a great reinforcement of Africans arrived by the Tagus, and forced the lines of the enemy to reinvade Toledo; so that Don Pedro, reckoning his forces, found himself commanding an army of eighty thousand men, including Jews, Saracens, Portuguese, and Castilians. He kept himself apart during all these preparations, managing his person with extreme care, and leaving nothing to chance, which might, by a single accident, lose him the result of a great blow he meditated.

Don Henry, on the contrary, already organized a government as an elected king, safe on his throne; he determined that on the morrow of an action that should yield him the crown, this royalty should be solid and healthy, as that consecrated by a long peace.

Agénor, during these mutual preparations, kept his eye on Montiel, and knew by means of well-paid spies, that Mothril, having established a cordon of troops between the chateau and Toledo, went nearly every day, on a Barbary horse, light as the wind, to visit Aïssa, entirely recovered from

her wound. He had tried every means to obtain an entrance into the chateau, or to apprise Aïssa; but nothing had succeeded. Musaron had brought himself into a fever by force of dreaming. At length Agénor saw no other safety but in a near and general combat, which would allow him to kill with his own hand Don Pedro, and to take Mothril alive, in such a way, that he could, for the ransom of this odious life, purchase Aïssa free and alive. This sweet thought, his incessant dream, fatigued the brain of the young man by his devoted assiduity. He had fallen into a profound disgust of everything which did not relate to an active and decisive war; and as he formed part of the council of chiefs, his opinion was always to raise the siege and force Don Pedro to a set battle. He encountered serious adversaries in the council, for the army of Henry did not amount to more than twenty thousand men, and many officers thought that it would be folly to hazard, with such a poor chance, such a good position. But Agénor represented that if Don Henry had at his disposition but twenty thousand men since his manifesto, and did not make himself known by some brilliant action, his forces would diminish instead of increase, whilst the Tagus brought daily to Don Pedro strong reinforcements of Saracens and Portuguese. "The towns are alarmed," he said, "they are floating between two banners; see the address with which Don Pedro reduces you to inaction, which to all is a proof of our impotence. Abandon Toledo, which you will not take. Remember that if you are conquerors, the town will be compelled to yield, whilst nothing urges them to at present; on the contrary, Mothril's plan is being executed. You will be enclosed between walls of stone and walls of steel; behind you the Tagus lined by eighty thousand soldiers. We must no longer fight merely to die well; to-day you can attack to conquer."

The foundation of this discourse was an interested one; but what good advice is not a little so? The constable had too much of the spirit and experience of war not to support Mauléon. There remained the indecision of the king, who risked much in striking a hazardous blow without having taken every precaution; but that which men do not do, God has done in his will.

Don Pedro was as eager as Agénor to obtain possession of the treasure which, next to his throne, he desired the most in the world. Every time at night, when his affairs being arranged, he could, along a hedge of devoted soldiers, hasten to Montiel, and contemplate for a quarter of an hour the beautiful Aïssa, so pale and so sad, the king was happy.

Mothril accorded him this happiness but rarely. The project of the Saracen was ripe, his net well stretched had caught his prey; it was only necessary to guard it, for a king ensnared is like a lion in the toils, he is never less taken than when caught. Mothril was solicited by Don Pedro to deliver Aïssa to him; he promised to marry her, and that she should ascend the throne. "No," replied Mothril, "it is not at the moment of a battle that a king celebrates his wedding—it is not when so many brave men are dying for him that he must think of love. No, await the victory, and then everything shall be permitted you." He thus restrained the furious king. His idea, however, was transparent, and Don Pedro would have easily recognised it if he had not been blind. Mothril resolved to make Aïssa queen of Castile, because he knew that this alliance of the

christian with the mahometan would stir up christianity, because, then, every one would abandon Don Pedro; and that the Saracens, so often vanquished, were ready to reconquer Spain, and instal themselves in it for ever. Mothril, in that case, would become king of Spain! Mothril so accredited amongst his countrymen, he who for six years had guided them, step by step, through this land of promise, with a progress evident to all, except to the king, drunk or mad. But as by giving Aïssa, by contriving a return of adversity to Don Pedro, it was necessary to act slowly and surely, Mothril waited for a decisive victory, which would destroy the most furious enemies that the Moors could encounter in Spain. It was necessary that with the name of Don Pedro, the Moors should gain a great battle, to kill Henry de Transtamara, Bertrand Duguesclin, and all the Bretons, to show, in fact, to christianity, that Spain was a soil easily opened when requisite to dig the tombs of invaders. It was also necessary that the greatest obstacle to the projects of Mothril, Agénor de Mauléon, should be removed, in order that the young Moresca, softened at first by promises and by the assurance of a near union, then discouraged by an unsuspecting death on the field of battle, should allow herself to be drawn by despair to serve Mothril, whom she would not distrust. The Moor redoubled his tenderness, his attentions; he went so far as to accuse Hafiz of having been in correspondence with Donna Maria to deceive Agénor or to ruin him. Hafiz was dead and could no longer justify himself. He procured for Aïssa news, either true or counterfeited, of Agénor. "He thinks of you," he said, "he loves you; he is near his seigneur the constable, and never misses an opportunity of corresponding with the emissaries I despatch to him to obtain news."

Aïssa, encouraged by these words, waited patiently. She found even a certain charm in this separation, which was a guarantee that Mauléon thought of his union with her. Her days were passed in the most retired apartment of the chateau. There, alone with her women, idle and thoughtful, she contemplated the country from a window looking perpendicularly on the ravine of the rocks of Montiel. When Don Pedro visited her, she showed him that formal and freezing politeness, which, among women incapable of dissimulation, is the supreme effort of hypocrisy. A coldness so unintelligible, that the presumptuous receive it sometimes for the timidity of a commencement of love.

The king had never experienced resistance. The proudest of women, Maria Padilla, had loved him, preferred him to all. How could he not believe in the love of Aïssa, especially since the death of Maria, and the calumnies of Mothril had persuaded him that the heart of his daughter was pure of every thought of love?

Mothril attentively watched the king at every visit. Not a word of this prince was without value to him, and he did not permit Aïssa to reply by a single word; her state of health imperiously demanded, he said, silence; and, besides, he was perpetually in fear of any intelligence of Don Pedro with the people of the chateau, an intelligence that would have delivered Aïssa to the king, as so many other women had been. Mothril, sovereign master at Montiel, had, therefore, taken his precautions. The best of all was to convince Aïssa that he approved of her love for Agénor. Now, the young girl was convinced. The result was that the day on which Mothril was to quit

the chateau to take the command of the African troops arrived for the battle, he had but two recommendations to give, the one to his lieutenant, the other to Aïssa herself. This lieutenant was the same who, before the combat at Navarrete, had so badly defended Aïssa's litter, but he burned to take his revenge. He was a soldier rather than a retainer. Incapable of humbling himself to the complaisances of Hafiz, he only comprehended the obedience due to his chief, and the respect he owed to the duties of religion. Aïssa herself only comprehended one thing also; to be united eternally to Mauléon.

"I depart for the battle," said Mothril to her. "I have made a compact with the Sire de Mauléon that we mutually spare each other in the combat. Conqueror, he will come for you in this chateau, the gates of which I will open to him, and you will fly with him, with me, if you love me as a father. Vanquished, he comes to me, I bring him to you, and he will be indebted to me both for his life and your possession. Shall you love me, Aïssa, for such devotedness? You comprehend that if the king, Don Pedro, knew a single word, suspected a single idea of this plan, my head would roll at his feet within an hour, and you would be for ever lost to the man you love.

Aïssa was lavish in protestations of gratitude, and saluted this day of mourning and blood as the aurora of her liberty and happiness.

When he had thus prepared the young girl, he gave his instructions to his lieutenant:—"Hassan," he said to him, "the prophet is about to decide on the life and fortune of Don Pedro; we are going to deliver battle. If we are vanquished, or even if we are conquerors, and if, on the evening of the battle, I am not returned to the chateau, it will be that I am either wounded, dead, or a prisoner; in this case, you will open the door of Donna Aïssa's apartment, here is the key; you will poignard her with her two women, and you will throw them from the top of the rock into the ravine, because it is not right that good mussulmans should be exposed to the insults of a christian, be he called Don Pedro or Transtamara. Watch better than at Navarrete; there your vigilance was at fault; I have pardoned you, I allowed you to live; this time the prophet will punish you. Swear then to execute my orders."

"I swear it!" said Hassan, coldly; "and the three women dead, I will poignard myself with them, that my spirit may watch over theirs."

"Thanks," replied Mothril, passing over his shoulders his collar of gold. "You are a faithful servant, and if we are victorious, you shall have the command of this castle. Let Donna Aïssa be ignorant, until the last moment, of the fate reserved for her; she is a woman, she is feeble, she must suffer death but once. As to the victory," he hastened to say, "I do not think it can escape us. Thus, my order is a precaution to which we shall not be compelled to recur." Having thus spoken, Mothril took his arms, his best horse, was followed by ten devoted men, and leaving the command of Montiel to Hassan, he departed at night to reach Don Pedro, who impatiently awaited him. Mothril counted upon the victory, and he had a right to. The chances were as follows:—Four to one; fresh succours arriving every moment, all the gold of Africa sent into Spain with a sullen and immutable will, that of a conquest a design never abandoned, often destroyed; whilst the knights of Europe fought there, some for cupidity, others from a religious

duty, all very coldly, and quite ready to feel disgusted at a reverse. If ever an event burst in the midst of well concerted projects, it was that of the battle to which history has given the poetic and chivalresque name of Montiel.

CHAPTER LXXI.

AÏSSA.

DON PEDRO, impatient, collected all his troops between Montiel and Toledo. They covered two leagues of country, and amphitheatred even to the mountains, cavalry and infantry, with a splendid ordnance.

There was no hesitation for Don Henry. To sustain the action like a man constrained, was unworthy a pretender who, in his turn, in Castile, had set up this device:—"Rester ici roi ou mort!" (Remain here a king or dead.) He went to the constable then, and said to him:—"This time, again, Sire Bertrand, I place in your hands the care of my kingdom. 'Tis you who will command. You may be more lucky than at Navarrete, you will not be more brave or more skilful. But, you know, christians, that which God does not permit at one time, he may, undoubtedly, permit at another."

"Then, I command, sire!" exclaimed the constable warmly.

"As a king! I am your first or your last lieutenant, sire constable," replied the prince.

"And you say to me what King Charles V., my wise and glorious master, said to me at Paris, on giving me the constable's sword."

"What did he say to you, brave Bertrand?"

"He said to me, sire:—'Discipline is badly observed in my armies, which are lost for want of submission and justice. There are princes who blush to obey a simple knight; but never was a battle gained without the concord of all and the will of one. Thus, you will command, Bertrand, and every disobedient head, were it that of my own brother, shall be humbled, or fall, if it will not submit.'" These words, pronounced before the whole council, summed up delicately the misfortune of Navarrete, where the imprudence of Don Telles and of Don Sancho, brothers of the king, had caused the ruin of a great portion of the army. The princes present heard these words of Duguesclin and blushed.

"Sire Constable," said the king, "I have said that you command, you are, therefore, the master. Whoever here does not execute your orders or your caprice, I will strike him myself with this my axe, were he my ally, were he my relation, were he my brother. In fact, who loves me, should wish me victory, and I shall only conquer by the obedience of all to the wisest captain of christianity."

"Thus be it," replied Duguesclin. "I accept the command; to-morrow we will deliver battle." The constable passed the whole night in attending to the reports of his spies and couriers. Some announced that fresh bands of Saracens were being landed at Cadiz. Others enlarged on the disasters of the country which the eighty thousand men ravaged for the last month like a cloud of locusts. "It is time that this were finished," said the constable to the king, "for these gentry will have devoured your kingdom so well that, after the victory, not a morsel of it will remain to you."

Agénor, joyful, and his heart oppressed at the

same time, as it happens on the eve of an event we desire, but which is to decide an important question, Agénor cheated his griefs and his uneasiness by an extraordinary display of activity. Always on horseback, he carried orders, assembled and grouped the companies, reconnoitred the ground, and assigned to each troop its place for the morrow.

Duguesclin divided his army into five corps. Four thousand five hundred horse, commanded by Oliver Duguesclin and the Bègue de Vilaines formed the advance guard. The chosen French and Spaniards, to the number of six thousand, formed the corps of battle, commanded by Don Henry de Transtamara. The Arragonese and other allies, held the rear guard. A reserve of four hundred cavalry, commanded by Oliver de Mauny was to cover the retreats. As to the constable, he had taken the three thousand Bretons, commanded by the younger De Mauny, Carlonet, La Houssaie, and Agénor. This troop, well mounted, and composed of invincible men, were, like a powerful arm, to charge wherever the eye of the chief judged it necessary for the gain of the day. Bertrand had the soldiers under arms before day-break, and each marched slowly to his post, so that before the day broke, the army was ranged, without fatigue and without confusion. He never made a long harangue:—"Think only," said he, "that you have each four enemies to kill, but that you are as good as ten, this collection of Jews, Moors, and Portuguese, cannot stand against the soldiers of France and Spain. Strike without pity, kill all that are not christians. I have never shed blood for pleasure; to day necessity makes it a law for us; there is no tie between Moors and Spaniards; they detest each other; interest alone unites them; but the moment the Moors find themselves sacrificed to the Spaniards, the moment they see you in the *melée* spare the christian to slay the infidel, suspicion will enter the ranks of the Moors, and the first despair passed, they will quickly look to their safety. Slay them, and without mercy!" This charge produced the accustomed effect; an extraordinary enthusiasm ran through the ranks.

Don Pedro, however, was at work; he was seen manœuvring those undisciplined but immense African battalions, whose arms and sumptuous uniforms glittered in the burning sun.

When Duguesclin saw this innumerable multitude from the top of a hill which he had chosen as an observatory, he feared that the small number of his soldiers would give too great a confidence to his enemies. He, therefore, thinned the rear ranks, to fill up those in front, in such a way as to make them appear equal. He also planted behind the little hillocks, a quantity of standards, that the Saracens might think that under these standards, there were soldiers.

Don Pedro saw all this; his genius rose with the danger. He addressed an eloquent discourse to his faithful Spaniards, and brilliant promises to the Saracens; but, brilliant as they were, they could not equal the hopes that his allies founded on his own spoils. The trumpets sounded on the part of Don Pedro; those of Duguesclin replied to them, and a great shock, like that of two worlds rushing upon each other, agitated the ground, even to the trees on the hills. From the first onset, the recommendation of Duguesclin was evident. The Bretons, by refusing to make mahometan prisoners, and by slaying all, whilst they spared the Spaniards and christians, threw a great mistrust in the minds of the infidels, and this mistrust spread, like

a shudder, through the ranks of the Saracens, like cold water. They imagined that the christians, on both sides, understood each other, and that, whether Henry were conqueror, or conquered, the Saracens would be the only victims. Their ranks had been attacked by the brother of Duguesclin and Bègue de Vilaines; these intrepid Bretons carried such a massacre round them, that the chiefs having been slain, and the Prince of Bennemarine himself, the Moors took fright and fled, their front ranks having been cut to pieces. The second wavered, but still advanced bravely; Duguesclin commanded the attack of his three thousand Bretons, and charged them so impetuously, that half of them turned upon their heels, or rather the heels of their horses. It was a second massacre; generals, nobles, soldiers, all were slain. Not a single one escaped. Duguesclin returned to his post; and heated, and wiping his face, he saw King Henry also returning from the pursuit, and, according to orders, resuming his rank with his men.

"Thanks, messeigneurs," said Bertrand, "all seems to go well, and almost of itself. We have only lost about a thousand men, twenty-five thousand Saracens are on the ground; look at the handsome carpet; all goes well."

"If it lasts!" murmured Henry.

"At least we will employ ourselves with it," replied the constable. "See *that* Mauléon who rushes on the third corps of Saracens, commanded by Mothril. The Moor has seen him, and orders them to enclose him; the cavaliers already depart. He will be killed, sound the retreat, trumpets."

Ten trumpets sounded; Agénor listened, and as submissive as though he had accomplished an exercise of the *manège*, he returned to his post under a shower of arrows that peppered his stout armour.

"Now," said the constable, "my advance guard attacks the Spaniards; they are good troops, messeigneurs, and we shall not get a cheap bargain. It must divide itself here into three corps, and attack on three sides. The king, he continued, will take the left, Oliver the right, myself shall wait."

As we see, he touched neither his reserve, nor his light horse. The Spaniards received the shock, as men determined to die or conquer. Henry, attacking the corps of Don Pedro, encountered the resistance of hatred and intelligent valour. The two kings recognised each other at a distance, and exchanged menaces without being enabled to meet. Around them rose mountains of men, and weapons clashing against each other, the mountains then sank down engulfed, and the earth drank in streams of blood. Henry's corps suddenly wavered; Don Pedro had the advantage, he fought like a lion, not like a soldier. Already one of his squires was slain, he changed his horse for the second time; he had not a wound, and his arm brandished with so much address and regularity his battle axe, that every blow felled a man. Henry saw himself surrounded with the Moors of Mothril, and by Mothril himself, who was the tiger, if Don Pedro was the lion. The French seigneurs were mowed down in numbers by the yatagans and cimeters of the Moors; their ranks began to open, and the arrows reached the breast of the king, already even an audacious one had struck him with his lance.

"It is time!" exclaimed the constable. "Forward, my friends, Notre-Dame du Guesclin, to the victory!"

The three thousand Bretons moved away with a terrible noise, and forming in an angle, penetrated

like a wedge of steel into the army of Don Pedro, which numbered twenty thousand men.

Agénor had at length the permission so ardently wished for, of fighting and taking Mothrill!

In a quarter of an hour, the Spaniards were broken, crushed; the Moorish cavalry could not maintain itself against the weight of men-at-arms, and the blow of the terrible *pointe*.

Mothril, determined to fly, but he encountered the Arragonese, and the men of Bègue de Vilaines, commanded by Mauléon.

It was necessary to pass at all hazards, under the penalty of being surrounded by this terrible wall. Agénor already thought himself the master of the life and liberty of Mothrill, but the latter, with three hundred men at the most, cut through the Bretons, lost two hundred and fifty cavaliers, and passed; on passing he struck a blow with his cimeter at the head of Agénor's horse, who was following him at two paces. Agénor rolled in the dust, Musaron let fly an arrow that missed, and Mothrill, like the wolf that flies, disappeared behind the piles of dead in the direction of Montiel.

At this moment, Don Pedro saw his men yielding; he felt, so to speak, on his visage the breath of his most furious enemies. But one of them broke his crest of gold, and slew his standard bearer; that which was the disgrace of the prince, saved the man. Don Pedro was no longer recognisable; the carnage around him continued without consciousness. It was then, that an English knight, with black armour, with his vizor carefully lowered, took his horse by the bridle, and dragged him from the field of battle. Four hundred horsemen, concealed behind a hillock by the prudent friend, escorted alone the fugitive king. It was all that remained to Don Pedro of the eighty thousand men who lived for him at the commencement of the battle. As the plain was covered with fugitives in all directions, Bertrand could not distinguish the troops of the king from the rest of the scattered bands; it was not even known whether Don Pedro were living or dead. The constable, therefore, launched at hazard his reserve, and the fifteen hundred cavaliers of Oliver de Mauny, on all that fled; but Don Pedro had the start, thanks to the excellence of his horses. They did not think of following him, besides, they could not recognise him; for all he was but an ordinary fugitive. But Agénor, he, who knew the road to Montiel, and the interest of Don Pedro to take refuge there, Agénor kept watch on this side. He had seen Mothrill escape in this direction. He guessed who this Englishman was, so complaisant towards the king, Don Pedro. He saw the corps of four hundred cavaliers escorting a man, who preceded them some way, thanks to the speed of his magnificent horse; he recognized the king by his broken helmet, and his golden spurs red with blood; he recognised him by the ardour with which he regarded from a distance the towers of Montiel. Agénor cast his eyes round him, to see if some corps of the army could assist him to follow this precious fugitive, and cut off the retreat of his four hundred cavaliers. He only saw the Bègue de Vilaines with eleven hundred horse who, out of breath, were reposing before making, like the rest, a general pursuit. Bertrand was too distant to drive the fugitives, and complete the victory on all points:—"Messire," said Agénor to the Bègue, "come quickly to my assistance, if you would take the king, Don Pedro, for 'tis him escaping yonder to the chateau."

"Are you sure of it?" exclaimed the Bègue.

"As of my life, messire;" replied Mauléon, "I recognise the man who commands these cavaliers; 'tis Caverley, without doubt he only makes so good an escort to the king, to take him at his ease and sell him; 'tis his trade."

"Yes," exclaimed the Bègue, "but we must not allow an Englishman to strike this handsome blow, when we are here so many brave French lances;" and turning towards his cavaliers:—"To horse, all!" said the captain, "and let ten men apprise M. the Constable, that we are gone towards Montiel to seek the vanquished king."

The Bretons charged with such fury, that they reached the cavaliers. The English chief immediately divided his troop into two bands; the one followed the individual supposed to be the king, the other stood firm before the Bretons.

"Charge! charge!" cried Agénor, "they only wish to gain time for the king to enter Montiel."

Unfortunately for the Bretons, a defile opened in front of them; they could not enter it by more than six abreast, to follow the English fugitives.

"We shall lose them! they are escaping us!" cried Mauléon; "courage, Bretons, courage!"

"Yes, we escape you, you *bearnais* of the devil!" hurled the English knight the chief of the escort; "besides, if you wish to take us, come." He spoke with this confidence, because Agénor, urged by his activity, his jealousy, outran all his companions, and appeared almost alone before the two hundred English lances.

The intrepid young man did not stop before this terrible danger; he buried his spurs in the flanks of his horse, white with foam.

Caverley was bold, and his natural ferocity easily accommodated itself to a victory that seemed almost inevitable. Placed as he was, in the midst of his men, he awaited Mauléon, fixing himself firmly in his saddle. A curious spectacle was then seen; that of a chevalier running full tilt, upon two hundred lances in rest.

"Oh! the cowardly Englishman!" cried the Bègue from a distance; "oh! coward! coward! Stop, Mauléon; 'tis too much chivalry! cowardly, cowardly English!"

Caverley was overcome by shame; after all, he was a knight, and owed a *coup-de-lance* for the honour of his golden spurs and his nation. He left the ranks, and put himself in battle array:—"I have already your sword," he cried to Mauléon, who advanced like lightning. "'Tis not here as in the cavern at Montiel, and, before long, I shall have the whole armour."

"Take the lance first," replied the young man, directing such a furious thrust with the lance, that the Englishman was unhorsed, bruised, and laid on the ground with his horse.

"Hurrah!" cried the Bretons, drunk with joy, and still advancing; which, the English seeing, they turned bridle, and endeavoured to overtake their companions, who were already flying across the plain, abandoning the king, carried by his horse towards Montiel.

Caverley endeavoured to rise, his loins were injured; his horse, in extricating himself, kicked him in the breast, and again nailed him to the ground, inundated with a stream of black blood.—"By the devil!" he murmured, "'tis finished; I shall not again arrest any one; I am a dead one!" and he fell back. At the same instant, all the Breton cavalry arrived, and the eleven hundred horses, barbed with iron, passed like a hurricane over the slashed body of this celebrated king-taker.

But this delay had saved Don Pedro; in vain, with heroic efforts, did the Bègue de Vilaines

give a triple soul to men and beasts. The Bretons ran with fury, at the risk of breaking their necks, but they did not arrive on the traces of Don Pedro till the moment when the prince entered the first barrier of the chateau, and in safety, for the gate was just closed. He thanked God for having this time escaped again. Mothrill himself had entered a quarter of an hour before. The Bègue, in despair, tore his hair.

"Patience, messire," said Agénor, "let us lose no time, but invest the place; what we have been unable to do to-day, we will do to-morrow."

The Bègue followed this advice, he dispersed all his horsemen round the castle, and the night fell at the moment the last egress was closed against any one who might attempt to quit Montiel.

Now arrived Duguesclin, with three thousand men, and he learnt from Agénor the important news. "'Tis unlucky," he said, "for the place is impregnable."

"Seigneur, we shall see," replied Mauléon; "if we cannot enter, it is quite as certain that no one can leave."

The constable was not a credulous man. He had, as to the talents of Don Pedro, as favourable an opinion, as he had an unfavourable one of his character. When he had made the round of Montiel, and reconnoitred the place; when he was convinced that with a good and sure guard they might prevent the egress of a mouse from the castle:—"No, Messire de Mauléon," he said, "we have not the happiness you would have us hope for. No, the king, Don Pedro has, not shut himself up in Montiel, because he knows too well that he would be blockaded and be taken by famine."

"I protest to you, monseigneur," replied Mauléon, "that Mothrill is in Montiel, and the king, Don Pedro with him."

"I shall believe it when I see him," said the constable. "How many in garrison are there at Montiel?" demanded Bertrand.

"Seigneur, about three hundred men."

"These three hundred men, if they would only roll stones on our heads, would kill five thousand of our men, without our being enabled to send them a single arrow. To-morrow Don Henry will be here; he is occupied in summoning Toledo to surrender; immediately after his arrival, we will deliberate if it is better to depart than to lose a month here for nothing."

Agénor wished to reply. The constable was opi-nated like a Breton, he suffered no reply; or, rather, would not allow himself to be persuaded.

The next morning, in fact, Don Henry arrived, radiant with victory. He brought the army intoxicated with joy, and when his council had deliberated on the question as to whether Don Pedro was or was not at Montiel:—"I think with the constable," said the king; "Don Pedro is too cunning to have openly shut himself up in a place without issue. We must, therefore, leave a feeble garrison here to trouble Montiel, force the castle to capitulate, and not leave behind us a place, proud at not having been taken; but I shall pass on; I have, thank God, other things to attend to, and Don Pedro is not here."

Agénor was present at the discussion. "Seigneur," he said, "I am very young and very inexperienced to raise my voice in the midst of so many valiant captains, but my conviction is such that nothing can shake it. I recognised Caverley pursuing the king, and Caverley has been slain. I saw Don Pedro enter the gates of Montiel, I

recognised his broken crest, his broken crown, his bloody golden spurs."

"And why should not Caverley himself have been mistaken? I, myself, changed armour at Navarrete with a faithful follower," replied Don Henry; "might not Don Pedro have done the same?" This last reply obtained a general assent. Agénor saw himself once more beaten. "I hope that you are now persuaded," said the king to him.

"No, sire," he replied, humbly, "but I can do nothing against the prudent ideas of your majesty."

"You must be convinced, Sire de Mauléon; you must be convinced."

"I will endeavour to be so," said the young man, with a pain he could not dissemble.

In fact, what a cruel position for this lover, so tender! Don Pedro was shut up with Aïssa. Don Pedro, exasperated by defeat, and having nothing more to care for; with the prospect of a speedy death, would not this prince, without faith, have sought to precede his agony by a last voluptuousness? would he leave intact and in the power of another the young girl he loved, and whom violence might place in his arms? Besides, was not Mothrill there, that artisan of odious *ruses*, capable of anything to push a step further his sanguinary and avaricious policy. This it was that rendered Agénor mad with rage and disappointment. He foresaw that in longer guarding his secret he exposed himself to witness the departure of Don Henry, the army, the constable; and that then Don Pedro, very superior in mind and talents to the wearied lieutenants left at Montiel, would succeed in escaping, after having sacrificed Aïssa to the caprice of a moment of *ennui*. He suddenly took his resolution, and demanded of the king a private interview. "Sire," he then said to him, "here is the reason why Don Pedro has taken refuge in Montiel, despite all appearances; 'tis a secret that I kept, for it is my own, but I ought to yield it for the honour of your glory; Don Pedro passionately loves Aïssa, the daughter of Mothrill; he wishes to marry her. It was for this that he suffered Mothrill to assassinate Donna Maria de Padilla; as for Maria he had had killed Madame Blanche de Bourbon."

"Well!" said the king, "Aïssa is at Montiel, then?"

"She is there," replied Agénor."

"Another thing of which you are not more certain than the other, my friend."

"I am sure of it, seigneur, because a lover always knows where his cherished mistress is."

"You love Aïssa—a Moresca?"

"I love her passionately, monseigneur, like Don Pedro, with this difference, that for me Aïssa would turn christian, whilst she would kill herself rather than Don Pedro should possess her."

Agénor had become pale in pronouncing these words, for he did not believe it, the poor chevalier, and this idea threw him into despair; besides, if Aïssa killed herself to prevent her dishonour, she was still lost for him. This avowal threw Don Henry into a profound perplexity. "This is, indeed, a reason; but narrate to me how you know that Aïssa is at Montiel." Agénor recounted from beginning to end the death of Hafiz, and the details of Aïssa's wound. "Have you any plan, eh?" said the king.

"I have one, seigneur, and if your majesty would lend me your assistance, I will place Don Pedro in your hands within a week, as on the last occasion I gave you certain information."

The king sent for the constable, to whom Agénor again recounted all he had said.



"I do not believe that a prince so *rusé*, so cruel, would allow himself to be caught from love to a woman," replied the constable; "but the Sire de Mauléon has my word to assist him in his own way, I will aid him."

"Leave the place invested, then," said Agénor; "have a fosse dug all round it, and with the soil of this fosse raise an intrenchment, behind which shall be concealed, not soldiers, but vigilant and able officers, I and my squire will lodge in a spot we know of, and from whence we can hear every sound in the place. Don Pedro, if he sees a strong besieging army will think his arrival at Montiel known, and he will be mistrustful; now mistrust is the salvation of so skilful and dangerous a man. Send away to Toledo all your troops, leaving only on the earthen ramparts two thousand men, quite sufficient to invest the castle and sustain a *sortie*. When Don Pedro thinks that he is negligently guarded, he will attempt to

escape, I'll answer for it." Scarcely had Agénor developed his plan and succeeded in captivating the attention of the king, when they announced, on the part of the governor of Montiel, a herald to the constable.

"Let him enter here," said Bertrand, "and explain himself."

It was a Spanish officer, named Rodrigo de Sanatrias. He announced to the constable that the garrison of Montiel viewed with alarm the display of considerable forces; that the three hundred men shut up in the castle with a single officer would not long struggle, as there was no hope since the departure and defeat of Don Pedro."

At these words the constable and the king looked at Agénor, as much as to say to him:—"You see that he is not there!"

"You surrender, then?" said the constable.

"Like brave men, yes, messire, after a certain

time, because the King Don Pedro must not accuse us on his return of having betrayed his cause without striking a blow."

"They say the king is with you?" demanded Don Henry.

The Spaniard laughed.—"The king is far enough," he said, "and what should he come here to do, where men besieged as you besiege us have only to die of hunger or surrender themselves?"

Another regard of the constable and of the king at Agénor:—"What do you positively demand, then?" enquired Duguesclin, "state your conditions."

"A truce of ten days," said the officer, "that Don Pedro may have time to come to our assistance, after which we surrender."

"Listen," said the king; "you positively assure us that Don Pedro is not in the place?"

"Positively, monseigneur, otherwise we should not demand our freedom; for on quitting you will see us all, and consequently you would recognise the king. Now, if we had lied, you would punish us; and if you took the king, no doubt you would not be too indulgent with him?"

This last sentence was a question; the constable did not reply to it. Henry de Transtamara had force enough to extinguish the sanguinary *éclat* which this supposition of the capture of Don Pedro made to glitter in his eyes. "We grant you the truce," said the constable, "but no one will leave the castle."

"But our provisions, seigneur?" said the officer.

"We will furnish you with them. We shall visit you, but you will not leave."

"'Tis not an ordinary truce, then," murmured the officer.

"Why would you wish to leave? to escape! but since we give you, after ten days, your lives!"

"I have nothing more to say," replied the officer; "I accept; have I your word, messire?"

"May I give it, seigneur?" demanded Bertrand of the king.

"Give, constable."

"I give it," replied the constable; "ten days truce, and the lives of the whole garrison."

"The whole?"

"Undoubtedly!" exclaimed Mauléon, "there can be no restrictions, since you announce yourself that Don Pedro is not in the place." These words escaped the young man *malgré* the respect he owed the two chiefs, and he gloried in having uttered them, for a visible pallor passed like a cloud across the features of Don Rodrigo de Sanatrias. He bowed and retired.

When he had left:—"Are you convinced," demanded the king, "young, obstinate, poor lover?"

"Convinced that Don Pedro is at Montiel, yes, sire, and that he will be in your hands within a week."

"Ah!" exclaimed the king, "this is what I call obstinacy."

"He is not a Breton, however," said Bertrand, laughing.

"Messeigneurs, Don Pedro plays the same game that we wish to play; sure of not escaping by force, he tries cunning. You are convinced, in his opinion, that he is not within; you grant a truce, you keep a negligent guard; well, he will pass, oh! I tell you so, he will pass and fly; but we shall be there, I hope. That which proves to you that he is outside Montiel, proves to me that he is within." Agénor quitted the tent of the king and the constable, with a warmth easily

conceivable. "Musaron," said he, "find the highest tent in the army, and attach to it my banner in such a way that it may be perfectly seen from the castle. Aïssa knows it, she will see it, she will know me to be near her, and will preserve all her courage. As to our enemies, seeing my pennon in the entrenchments, they will believe me here, and will not suspect that we mean to glide once more into the grotto with the spring. Come, my brave Musaron; come, this last effort and we touch the end.

Musaron obeyed; Mauléon's banner floated proudly above the others.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE RUSE OF THE VANQUISHED.

HENRY DE TRANSTAMARA departed from before Montiel with the constable and the army. There only remained two thousand Bretons and the Bègue de Vilaines round the earth entrenchments.

Love had inspired Mauléon. Each of his reflections approached the truth. He spoke, in fact, as though he had heard all that took place in the castle.

Scarcely arrived after the battle, Don Pedro, breathless, choking, foaming with rage, threw himself on a carpet in Mothril's chamber, and remained motionless, silent, unapproachable, with superhuman efforts to restrain within himself the fury and despair that boiled in him. All his friends dead! his noble army destroyed! so many hopes of vengeance and of glory annihilated in the short space taken by the sun to make the tour of the horizon! Henceforth, nothing—flight, exile, misery; combats of partisans, disgraceful, and without object! an unworthy death, on a shameful field of battle! No more friends! This prince, who had never loved, experienced the most cruel torments in doubting of the affection of others; because kings, for the most part, confound the respect due to them with the affection they ought to inspire. Having the one, they dispense with the other. Don Pedro saw enter his chamber Mothril, furrowed with reddened stains. His armour was perforated with holes; through some issued blood, which was not that of his enemies.

The Moor was livid. His eyes betokened a savage resolution. He was no longer the submissive, ramping Saracen; he was a man proud and intractable, who addressed his equal. "King Don Pedro," he said, "you are vanquished, then?"

Don Pedro raised his head, and read in the cold eyes of the Moor, all the transfiguration of his character. "Yes," replied Don Pedro, "and not again to rise."

"You despair?" said Mothril; "your God, then, is not so good as ours? I, who am also vanquished and wounded—I do not despair, I have prayed—now I am strong."

Don Pedro bent down his head with resignation:—"It's true," he said, "I had forgotten God."

"Unhappy king, you know not, however, the greatest of your misfortunes. With your crown, you will lose your life."

Don Pedro started, and launched a terrible regard at Mothril:—"You will assassinate me?" he said.

"Me! me! your friend! you are getting mad, King Don Pedro, you have enemies enough without me, and I should have no need, if I wished your death, to stain my hands with your blood. Rise, and with me give a glance at the plain."

In fact, the plain was brilliant with lances and

cuirasses, which, glistening in the rays of the setting sun, formed by degrees round Montiel a circle of iron, more and more circumscribed.

"Enclosed! we are lost! Do you see it, Don Pedro?" said Mothril; "for this impregnable castle, if we had provisions, could neither feed the garrison, nor yourself; but they surround you, they have seen you, you are lost."

Don Pedro did not immediately reply:—"They have seen me? who has seen me?"

"Think you it is to take Montiel, this useless pile, that the banner of the Bèguede Vilaines rests here—and stay, see yonder the banner of the constable arriving; does the constable want Montiel. No! 'tis you they seek; yes! 'tis you they want."

"They will not have me living," said Don Pedro.

Mothril, in his turn, said nothing.

Don Pedro continued with irony:—"The faithful friend, the man full of hope, who cannot even say to his king—live and hope!"

"I seek the means," he said, "of getting him from hence."

"You proscribe me?"

"I would save my life; I would not be forced to kill Donna Aïssa, to prevent her falling into the hands of the christians."

The name of Aïssa brought the blood to the forehead of Don Pedro. "'Tis for her," he murmured, "that I am caught in the snare; but, for the desire to see her once more, I should have speeded to Toledo. Toledo can defend herself—they do not die of hunger there. The Toledans love me, and die for me; I could, under Toledo, give a last battle, and find a glorious death; who knows, that of my enemy, the bastard of Alphonso, that of Henry de Transtamara! a woman has brought me to my ruin?"

"I would sooner have seen you at Toledo," said the Moor, coldly, "for I would have arranged your affairs in your absence—and my own."

"Whereas, you will do nothing for me here," exclaimed Don Pedro, whose fury began to take a free course. "Well, miserable, I shall finish my days here, be it so, but I shall have punished you for your crimes and your disloyalty; I shall have tasted a last happiness; Aïssa, whom you have offered me as a lure, shall be mine this very night."

"You deceive yourself," said the Moor, calmly, "Aïssa will not be yours."

"Do you forget that I command here three hundred soldiers?"

"Do you forget that you cannot leave this chamber but at my pleasure, that I shall stretch you dead at my feet if you stir, that I shall throw your body to the soldiers of the constable, who will receive my present with transports of joy?"

"A traitor!" murmured Don Pedro.

"Madman! blind! ingrat!" exclaimed Mothril, "say your preserver, then. You wish to fly, you would take all with your liberty—fortune, crown, glory; fly then, and lose no time; do not again irritate God by debaucheries, by exactions, and insult not the only friend that remains to you."

"A friend, who thus speaks to me!"

"Would you rather that he flattered you, to deliver you up?"

"I resign myself. What will you do?"

"I will send a herald to these Bretons who watch you. They think you are here, let us deceive them; if we find them resigning the hope of so rich a capture, let us profit by the moments; escape on the first opportunity their negligence

will afford you. Come, have you a man here devoted, intelligent, whom you could send to them?"

"I have Rodrigo Sanatrias, a captain who owes me everything."

"That is no reason. Does he still hope something from you?"

Don Pedro smiled bitterly:—"Its true," he said, "our only friends are those who hope. Well, I will make him hope."

"Very well, let him come!" Mothril, whilst the king called Sanatrias, made some Moors ascend, whom he placed as *surveillants* round Aïssa's chamber.

Don Pedro passed a portion of the night in discussing with the Spaniard the means of entering into negotiation with the enemy. Rodrigo was equally ingenious as faithful; he comprehended, besides, that the safety of Don Pedro was the safety of all; but that, to have the vanquished king, the conquerors would sacrifice ten thousand men, demolish the rock, destroy all by starvation and the sword, but would attain their object. At day-break Don Pedro saw, with despair, the banners of Don Henry. To turn a king from his road, and a constable from his plans, they must have resolved to take, in Montiel, something besides a garrison. Don Pedro immediately despatched Rodrigo Sanatrias, who fulfilled his mission with the address and the success we have seen. He brought to the castle news, that filled all the prisoners with joy. Don Pedro did not cease demanding of him the details, and from each he drew favourable inductions; the departure of the troops of the king and of the constable, finished proving to him how prudent and efficacious had been the advice of the Moor.

"At present," said Mothril, "we have nothing but an ordinary enemy to fear; let a dark night come, and we are saved."

Don Pedro could not contain his joy; he was become affectionate—communicative with the Moor: "Listen!" he said to him, "I see that I have treated you ill, you deserve better than to be the minister of a fallen king; I will marry Aïssa, I will unite myself to you by the strongest ties. God has abandoned me, I will abandon God; I will make myself the worshipper of Mahomet, since 'tis he who saves me through you. The Saracens have seen me at work; they know if I am a good captain, and a valiant soldier, I will assist them to reconquer Spain; and, if they judge me worthy to command them, I will place on the throne of Castile a mahometan king, to disgrace christianity, which busies itself about intestine quarrels, instead of attending seriously to the interests of religion."

Mothril listened, with a gloomy defiance, to the promises dictated by fear or enthusiasm:—"Save yourself first," he said, "we will then see."

"I would," replied Don Pedro, "that for my promises, you had a more certain pledge than my simple word; send for Aïssa, before you I will engage my faith with her, you shall write my promise, and I will sign it; we will make an alliance together, instead of an arrangement." Don Pedro had again found, in thus engaging himself, all his cunning, all his former strength; he knew well that, by holding out to Mothril the hope of a future, he prevented him from entirely abandoning his cause, and that, without this hope, Mothril was a man to deliver him to his enemies.

On his side, Mothril had had the same idea, but he saw the means of saving Don Pedro, that is, of rekindling a war, the whole fruits of which would

fall to his cause, whilst, Don Pedro taken or dead, the Saracens had no longer a pretext to continue a ruinous war against enemies, henceforth invincible. Don Pedro was a skilful captain; Mothril knew it well. Don Pedro knew the resources of the Moors; he might, by being reconciled with the christians, do them an incalculable injury. Besides, Mothril was bound to him by the chain of crime and ambition, a mysterious, all-powerful link, the extent and force of which we cannot sound. He listened favourably to Don Pedro, therefore, and said to him:—"I accept your offers with gratitude, my king, and I will put you in a position to realize them. You wish to see Aïssa, you shall see her; only do not alarm her modesty by too passionate a discourse; remember that she is scarcely recovered from a long and cruel illness."

"I will remember all," replied Don Pedro.

Mothril went to seek Aïssa, who was uneasy at not receiving any news of Mauléon. The sound of weapons, the steps of attendants and soldiers, announced to her the imminence of the danger; but, above all, what she feared, was the arrival of Don Pedro, and she was ignorant of this arrival. Mothril, who had made her so many promises, must again lie to her; he had to fear that she would betray before the king the scene of the death of Maria de Padilla. This interview was to be feared, but he could not refuse it to the king. Until now he had avoided all explanation; but, this time, Don Pedro would question, Aïssa would speak:—"Aïssa," he said, to the young girl, "I come to announce to you that Don Pedro is vanquished, concealed in this castle."

Aïssa turned pale.

"He wishes to see you, and speak to you; do not refuse him, for he commands here; besides, he departs to night. It is better to remain on good terms with him."

Aïssa appeared to believe in the words of the Moor; a painful agitation, however, apprised her that a fresh misfortune awaited her:—"I will not speak to the king," she said, "nor see him, before I have again seen the Sire de Mauléon, whom you promised to bring here, conquered or conqueror."

"But Don Pedro waits."

"What matter?"

"He commands, I tell you."

"I have a means of escaping from his authority; you know it well. What did you promise me?"

"I will keep my promises, Aïssa; but, assist me."

"I will assist no one to deceive."

"'Tis well! deliver up my head, then; I am prepared to die." This threat always had its effect on Aïssa; accustomed to the expeditious mode of Moorish justice, she knew that a sign from the master lopped a head; she supposed that of Mothril deeply compromised.

"What will the king say to me? how will he speak to me?" she asked.

"In my presence."

"This is not enough; I should wish there to be many present at the interview."

"I promise it you."

"I would be sure of it."

"How?"

"This chamber leads to the platform of the castle; furnish this platform with men; let my women accompany me. My litter being carried there, I will listen to what the king may say to me."

"It shall be done as you desire, Donna Aïssa."

"Now, what will Don Pedro say to me?"

"He will propose to marry you."

Aïssa made a violent gesture of denial.

"I know it well," interrupted Mothril; "but let him say it. Remember that he departs to night."

"But I will not reply."

"On the contrary, you will reply with courtesy. Regard all these Spanish men at-arms and Bretons who surround the castle, these men will take us by violence, and put us to death if they find the king with us. Let Don Pedro go to save ourselves."

"But the Sire de Mauléon?"

"He cannot save us if Don Pedro is here."

Aïssa interrupted Mothril:—"You lie," she said, "and you cannot even flatter me to unite him to me. Where is he? what is he doing? does he live?"

At this moment, Musaron, by order of his master, raised in the air the banner well known by Aïssa.

The young girl observed this cherished signal. She joined her hands in ecstasy, and exclaimed:—"He sees me! he hears me! Pardon me, Mothril, I had wrongly suspected you. Go and tell the king that I follow you."

Mothril turned his eyes towards the plain, saw the standard, recognised it, became pale, and stammered: "I go." and then with fury:—"Cursed christian!" he exclaimed, when out of hearing of Aïssa:—"You still pursue me, then? Oh! I shall escape you."

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE ESCAPE.

DON PEDRO received Aïssa on the platform, in the midst of the witnesses she had required. His love was expressed without passion, his desires were almost stagnant by a pre-occupation of the intended evasion.

Aïssa, therefore, had nothing to reproach Mothril with in this respect; and she did not cease regarding, during the whole conference, that blest banner of Mauléon which floated resplendent in the sun at the extremity of the ramparts. Aïssa distinguished under this banner a man-at-arms, who, at a distance, she might take for Agénor; thus had our chevalier calculated. Thus finding means of calming Aïssa by disclosing his presence to her, and Mothril, by removing his suspicions of any concealed enterprise, Don Pedro had decided that three of his most devoted friends should hold themselves in readiness to reconnoitre at night the earthen ramparts. There was really a point of the rampart more negligently guarded than the others, this was at the rock that looks perpendicularly into the ravine. Many advised the king to fly this side by means of a rope attached to the windows of Donna Aïssa; but when arrived at the base the king would have no horse to escape rapidly. They then resolved to sound the ramparts at the feeblest point, and to open for themselves a passage there, through which, the sentinels removed or poignarded, the king would fly, mounted on a good horse. But the day's sun promised a clear night, which prevented the execution of the project. Suddenly, as if fortune was determined to favour every wish of Don Pedro, a west wind drove up burning clouds of sand on the plain, and the coppery looking clouds, in long streams, appeared at the extremity of the horizon like the advance guard of a terrible enemy. As the sun fell by degrees behind the towers of Toledo, these thickening clouds blackened and enveloped the sky like a sombre mantle.

heavy rain fell about nine o'clock in the evening.

Agénor and Musaron had, immediately after sun-set, ensconced themselves side by side in their spring-grotto hiding place. The chosen men of Bègue de Vilaines had dug, under the exterior wall of the rampart, a shelter in the earth dried up by the noon day's sun, so that there was round Montiel an uninterrupted chain of concealed men. Apparently, and from the orders of Agénor, who had taken the initiative in all since the departure of the constable, sentinels guarded, or seemed to guard, from point to point, the line of communication. The rain had compelled the sentinels to take to their cloaks; some of them had lain down in these cloaks. At ten o'clock Agénor and Musaron heard the rock echo under the steps of men. They listened more attentively, and finished by seeing pass three officers of Don Pedro, who, with a thousand precautions, and rather crawling than walking, were exploring the rampart at a place previously noted. The sentinel at this place had been intentionally removed; there was only the officer concealed under a mound of earth outside. The officers observed that this side was not guarded; they joyfully communicated to each other this discovery, and Agénor heard them boasting of it on remounting the steep staircase. One of them said in a low tone:—"It is slippery, and the horses will have some difficulty in keeping their feet on descending."

"Yes, but they will run the better on plain ground," replied another.

These words filled the heart of Agénor with joy. He sent Musaron to the entrenchments, to announce to the nearest Breton officer that something fresh was about to take place. The officer, lying down, communicated the news to his neighbour, who did the same, and thus, all round Montiel, circulated the information given by Agénor. Half-an-hour had not elapsed when Agénor heard, at the summit of the platform, a horse's hoof strike against the rock; it seemed to him that this sound tore his heart, so sharp and painful was the impression. The noise approached—the steps of other horses were heard, but only perceptible to Agénor and Musaron.

In fact, the king had given orders for the horses' hoofs to be enveloped in tow, that they might not sound so loud.

The king arrived the last; a little dry cough, which he could not restrain, betrayed his presence. He walked with difficulty, supporting his horse by the bridle, whose hind feet slid from under him in the steep descent. As the fugitives passed before the grotto, Musaron and Agénor recognised them. When the turn of Don Pedro arrived, they distinctly saw his pale but assured face. Arrived at the entrenchments, the two first fugitives mounted on horseback and cleared the parapet; but they had scarcely gone ten paces ere they fell into a ditch, ready prepared, where twenty men-at-arms gagged them and took them away without noise.

Don Pedro, who suspected nothing, jumped on his horse in his turn; suddenly, he was seized by Agénor, who enclosed him with his two nervous arms, whilst Musaron bound his mouth with a belt. This done, Musaron pricked his horse with the point of a dagger, the horse bounded over the rampart and fled, making his gallop heard over the rocky ground. Don Pedro struggled with the strength of despair.

"Take care," whispered Agénor to him, "I shall be forced to kill you if you make a noise."

Don Pedro succeeded in making these words heard, in a choking voice: "I am the king, treat me as a knight."

"I know well you are the king," said Agénor, "and I expected you here. On the faith of a knight you shall not be ill-treated." He took the king on his robust shoulders, and thus crossed the line of ramparts, in the midst of the officers, who bounded with joy. "Silence! silence!" said Agénor, "no exclamation, gentlemen—no cries! I have done the work of the constable, do not let mine fail."

He carried his prisoner to the tent of Bègue de Vilaines, who hung round his neck and tenderly embraced him.

"Quick! quick!" exclaimed the captain, "couriers to the king who is before Toledo; couriers to the constable who holds the country, to inform him that the war is finished."

CHAPTER LXXIV.

DIFFICULTY.

WHILST the whole camp of the Bretons passed the night in the intoxication of triumph, and Don Pedro in the agony of terror, some cavaliers mounted on the best horses of the army went to apprise Don Henry and the constable.

Agénor had passed the night with the prisoner, who, preserving a ferocious silence, refused all consolation. They could not leave bound a king, a captain; they untied the prisoner, therefore, after having made him swear by his word as a gentleman that he would make no effort to escape.

"But," said the Bègue de Vilaines to his officers, "we know what the word of Don Pedro is worth; double the post, and let the tent be surrounded in such a way, that he will not even dream of flying."

They found the constable about three leagues from Montiel, driving before him, like flocks of sheep, the remains of the army vanquished the day before, and completing, by the capture of prisoners, at a rich ransom, the gain of this important day. For the Toledans had refused to open their gates even to the vanquished, their allies, so much did they fear a deception in usage in barbarous times, in which cunning had as large a share as force.

The constable had no sooner heard the news than he cried: "This Mauléon had more wit than us!" And he pushed his horse towards Montiel, with a joy difficult to describe. Scarcely arrived, the rising day silvered already the summits of the mountains, the constable took Mauléon in his arms, modest in his triumph. "Thanks," he said to him, "messire, for your courageous perseverance, and for your foresight. Where is the prisoner?" he added.

"In the tent of Bègue de Vilaines," replied Mauléon; "but he sleeps, or feigns to sleep."

"I will not see him," said Bertrand; "it is right that the first person to have an interview with Don Pedro should be Don Henry, his conqueror and his master. Have they placed a good guard? Certain evil minds have only to say a good prayer to the devil to be delivered."

"There are thirty knights round the tent, messire," replied Agénor. "Don Pedro will not escape, unless one of Satan's angels drags him by the hair, as the prophet, Habacuc formerly; and we should then see him go."

"And I would send to him, through the air," said Musaron, "an arrow that would make him arrive in hell before the angel of darkness."

"Let them dress a camp-bed for me before the tent," said the constable; "I will, like the others, guard the prisoner, to present him myself to Don Henry." The constable was obeyed, and his bed, a bed of planks and heath, was raised at the door of the tent. "*A propos*," said Bertrand, "he is almost a miscreant, he is capable of killing himself; have they taken away his weapons?"

"They dared not, seigneur, his head is sacred; he has been proclaimed king before the altar of God."

"'Tis right; besides, we owe him, until the first orders of Don Henry, every respect and assistance."

"You see, seigneur," said Agénor, "how that Spaniard lied, when he assured you that Don Pedro was not at Montiel."

"Therefore, we will hang this Spaniard and the whole garrison," coolly said the Bègue de Vilaines. "In lying, he has disengaged the word of the constable."

"Monseigneur," replied Agénor, warmly, "these unfortunate soldiers are guilty of nothing when a chief orders. Besides, if they surrender, you will commit a murder; and if they do not surrender, we shall not take them."

"They will be taken by famine," replied the constable.

The idea of seeing Aïssa perish by hunger drove Mauléon beyond the limits of his natural discretion. "Oh! monseigneurs," he said, "you will not commit a cruelty."

"We will punish lying and disloyalty," said the constable. "Besides ought we not to rejoice that this lie will furnish us with an opportunity of punishing the Saracen, Mothril? I will send a herald to this miserable to inform him that Don Pedro is taken; that if he has been taken it is because he was at Montiel; that, consequently, they told me a lie, and that to set an example to all felons, the garrison shall be decimated on surrendering, or condemned to perish by hunger if it does not surrender."

"And Donna Aïssa?" interrupted Mauléon, pale with alarm and love.

"We will spare the women, be it well understood," replied Duguesclin; "for cursed be the soldier who does not spare old men, women, and children."

"But Mothril will not spare Aïssa, monseigneur; it would be to leave her there for some one after him; you do not know him, he will kill her. Now you have promised to grant me what I should demand, messire; I demand the life of Aïssa."

"And I grant it you, my friend; but how will you act to save her?"

"I shall request your lordship to send to Mothril no herald but myself, and to leave me free to speak as I choose. In this way I engage a prompt submission of the Moor and the garrison. But for pity's sake, monseigneur, the lives of the unfortunate soldiers? they have done nothing."

"I see I must yield. You have rendered me so many services that I can refuse you nothing. The king, on his part, owes you as much as I do, since you have taken Don Pedro, without which our victory of yesterday was incomplete. I can, then, in his name and my own, grant what you desire. Aïssa is yours. The soldiers, the officers even of the garrison shall save their lives and baggage; but Mothril shall be hung."

"Seigneur —"

"Oh! on this, demand nothing more of me—you will not obtain it; I should offend God if I spared this villain."

"Monseigneur, the first thing he will ask me,

will be if his life will be spared; what shall I reply?"

"You will reply as you choose, Messire de Mauléon."

"But you would have spared him according to the truce made with Rodrigo Sanatrias."

"Him! never! I said the garrison. Mothril is a Saracen, I do not reckon him amongst the defenders of the castle; besides, I have an account to balance between God and myself, I tell you. When once you have Donna Aïssa, my friend, nothing regards you farther. Leave me to act."

"Once more, messire, allow me to entreat you. Yes, this Mothril is a miserable: yes, God would look with favour on his punishment; but he is disarmed, he can no longer injure."

"You may as well speak to a statue, Sire de Mauléon," replied the constable. "Allow me to repose, I beg. As to the words you will say to the garrison, I leave you free. There!"

There was no reply to this. Agénor knew well that Duguesclin, fixed on a project, remained inflexible, and never turned back. He also knew that Mothril, on learning that Don Pedro had fallen into the hands of the Bretons, would be indifferent to everything, being convinced that they would not spare him. Mothril, in fact, was one of those men who knew how to bear the weight of the hatred they inspired, and submit to the consequences. Implacable with others, he resigned himself to receive no quarter. Again, Mothril would never consent to yield Aïssa. The position of Agénor was most difficult.

"If I tell a falsehood, I dishonour myself," he said; "if I promise Mothril his life without keeping my word to him, I become unworthy the love of woman, and the esteem of men." He was plunged in these cruel perplexities, when the trumpets announced the arrival of the king, Don Henry, before the tent. The day was already advanced, and they saw from the camp, the platform on which Mothril and Don Rodrigo were walking, engaged in a warm conversation.

"That which the constable has not granted you," said Musaron to his master, whom he observed to be sorrowful, "the king, Don Henry, will grant you; ask, and you will obtain; what matters the mouth that says yes, provided, it has said a *yes*, that you can, without lying, report to Mothril?"

"Let us try," said Agénor. And he knelt near the stirrup of Henry, whom a squire assisted to dismount.

"Good news," said the king, "as it appears."

"Yes, monseigneur."

"I will recompense you, Mauléon; demand an earldom of me if you will."

"I ask you for the life of Mothril."

"'Tis more than an earldom," replied Henry; but I grant it you."

"Depart quickly, sir," said Musaron, in his master's ear, "for the constable approaches, and it would be too late if he heard."

Agénor kissed the hand of the king, who, dismounting, exclaimed:—"Good day, dear constable, it appears that the traitor is ours?"

"Yes, monseigneur," said Bertrand, who feigned not to have seen Agénor conversing with the king.

The young man commenced running as though he carried off a treasure. He was entitled, as an acknowledged herald, to take with him two trumpeters; he chose them, made them precede him, and followed by the inseparable Musaron, he climbed the path to the first door of the castle.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE DIPLOMACY OF LOVE.

THEY did not delay opening to him, and he could, in advancing on the path, judge of the difficulties of the ground. Sometimes the path was not more than a foot wide, and on every side the rock became perpendicular as it rose above the hollow ravine or funnel, the Bretons, little accustomed to mountains, felt a vertigo seize upon them.

"Love renders us very imprudent, sir," said Musaron, to his master; "however, God is above us all."

"Do you forget that our persons are inviolable?"

"Eh! sir, what has the cursed Moor to care about, and what do you see inviolable, for him, on the earth?"

Agénor imposed silence on his squire, continued to climb the path, and reached the platform on which Mothril awaited him, having recognized him whilst ascending.

"The Frenchman," he murmured; "what does his presence in the castle signify?"

The trumpets sounded; Mothril made a sign that he was listening.

"I come," said Agénor, "on the part of the constable, to say this to you: 'I had made a truce with my enemies, on the condition that no one left the castle, I had granted the lives of all, under this condition; to day I must change my mind, since you have failed in your word.'"

Mothril became pale, and replied:—"In what?"

"Last night," continued Agénor, "three cavaliers passed the ramparts, despite our sentinels."

"Well!" said Mothril, making a violent effort in himself, "you must punish them with death, for they have perjured themselves."

"That would be easy," said Agénor, "if we held them; but they have fled."

"Why did you not arrest them?" exclaimed Mothril, unable to entirely suppress his joy, after experiencing so much alarm.

"Because our guards, trusting in your word, watched less vigilantly than usual, and, according to the argument of the Senor Don Rodrigo here, none of you had any interest in escaping, all their lives being safe."

"You conclude?" said the Moor.

"By changing something in the conditions of the truce."

"Oh! I suspected it," said Mothril, bitterly. "The clemency of the christians is as fragile as a glass; we must be careful we do not break it in drinking. You are come to tell us that several soldiers—were they soldiers?—having escaped from Montiel, you will be forced to put us all to death?"

"And in the first place, Saracen," said Agénor, hurt at this reproach, and this supposition, "in the first place, you ought to know who are the fugitives."

"How should I know them?"

"Count your garrison."

"'Tis not I who command."

"You do not make a part of your garrison, then?" said Agénor, quickly, "you are not comprised in the truce, then?"

"You are cunning for a young man."

"I am become so from mistrust, from seeing the Saracens; but reply."

"I am the chief, in fact," said Mothril, who feared to lose the benefits of a capitulation, if one were possible.

"You see that I had some reason to be cunning,

since you lie. But this is not the question; you admit that the conditions have been violated."

"'Tis you who say so, christian."

"And you ought to believe me," added Mauleón, with haughtiness. "Here, then, is the order of the constable, our chief; the place shall be surrendered to-day, or a rigorous blockade will be commenced."

"This is all?" said Mothril.

"This is all."

"You will starve us?"

"Yes."

"And if we determine to die?"

"You are free."

Mothril regarded Agénor with a peculiar expression, which the latter perfectly comprehended.—"All?" he said, dwelling on the word.

"All!" replied Mauleón; "but if you die, it will be your own fault. Don Pedro will not assist you, believe me."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"Why?"

"Because we have an army to oppose to him, and he has none; and that before the day he obtains one, you will all be starved to death."

"You reason justly, christian."

"Save your life, then, since it is in your power."

"Ah! you offer us our lives?"

"I offer them to you."

"On the faith of whom?—of the constable?"

"On the faith of the king, who has just arrived."

"In fact, he has arrived," said Mothril, with inquietude; "but I do not see him."

"Look at his tent, or rather that of the Bègue de Vilaines."

"Yes, yes. You are sure they will give us our lives?"

"I guarantee it."

"And myself, also?"

"To you, Mothril, I have the king's word."

"We may retire where we like?"

"Where you please."

"With followers, baggage, and treasures?"

"Yes, Saracen."

"'Tis very handsome!"

"You do not think so. You are mad! why should we ask you to come to us to-day, when, dead or alive, we shall have you by remaining here a month."

"Oh! you may fear Don Pedro."

"I assure you we do not fear him."

"Christian, I will reflect."

"If in two hours you have not surrendered," said the impatient young man, "look upon yourself as dead. The iron enclosure will not open."

"Good, good! two hours! 'tis no great generosity," said Mothril, questioning the horizon with anxiety, as if from the plain a saviour was to arise.

"This is your only reply?" said Agénor.

"In two hours," faltered Mothril, pensive.

"Oh! sir, he will surrender; you have persuaded him," glided Musaron into his master's ear.

Suddenly Mothril looked towards the camp of the Bretons, with an attention he did not dissemble:—"Oh! oh!" he murmured, pointing out to Rodrigo the tent of the Bègue de Vilaines.

The Spaniard leaned over the parapet the better to observe.

"Your christians are tearing each other, as it appears," said Mothril; "see how they run towards that tent."

In fact, a crowd of soldiers and officers were running towards the tent with signs of the greatest anxiety. The tent was agitated, as if shaken in the interior by wrestlers.

Agénor saw the constable rush to it with an appearance of anger:—"There is something strange and frightful passing in the tent where Don Pedro is," he said; "let us go, Musaron."

The attention of the Moor was diverted by this incomprehensible movement; that of Rodrigo was still more so. Agénor took advantage of their inattention to descend with his Bretons the difficult steep. In the middle of the descent he heard a horrible cry mount from the plain towards the sky. It was time that he arrived at the barriers; scarcely was the last door closed behind him, ere he heard the thundering voice of Mothrill cry:—"Allah! Allah! the traitor deceived me; the king, Don Pedro, has been taken. Allah! Let them arrest the Frenchman, and let him serve us as a hostage. To the doors! close! close!"

But Agénor had cleared the ramparts; he was in safety; he could even see the whole of the terrible spectacle of which, from the summit of the platform, the Moor had been an astonished spectator. "Mercy on us!" said Agénor, trembling, and raising his hands towards heaven, "another minute and we were taken and lost; what I see there in the tent would have excused Mothrill for his bloodiest reprisals."

CHAPTER LXXVI.

WHAT THEY SAW IN THE TENT OF THE BEGUE DE VILAINES.

THE king, Don Henry, after having quitted Agénor, and having given him the pardon of Mothrill, wiped his face, and said to the constable:—"My friend, my heart beats very strongly, I am about to see in his humiliation him whom I mortally hate; 'tis a joy mixed with bitterness, and I cannot explain the two feelings at this moment."

"This proves, sire," said the constable, "that the heart of your majesty is noble and grand; without that it would contain nothing but the joy of triumph."

"It is strange," added the king; "but I cannot enter that tent without distrust, and, I repeat it, my heart oppressed. How is he?"

"Sire, he is seated on a stool, he keeps his head buried in his two hands. He appears dispirited overcome."

Henry de Transtamara made a sign with his hand, and every one moved away: "Constable," he said, in a low tone, "a last advice. I beg of you. I would spare his life; but must I exile him, or imprison him in a fortress?"

"Ask me not for advice, sire king," replied the constable; "for I know not how to give it you. You are wiser than I am, and you are in the presence of a brother. God will inspire you."

"Your words have decided me without drawing back, constable, thanks." The king raised the door-screen of the tent, and entered.

Don Pedro had not quitted the posture described to the king by Duguesclin. His despair, however, was not silent; he betrayed himself outside by exclamations, now sullen, now furious. It seemed like a commencement of madness.

Henry's step caused Don Pedro to raise his head.

The moment he recognised his conqueror by his majestic countenance, and his crest composed of a golden lion, fury took possession of him.

"You come," he said, "you have dared to come."

Henry made no reply, and preserved his silent and reserved attitude.

"I vainly called to you in the *melée*," continued Don Pedro, getting animated by degrees; "but you have only courage to insult a vanquished enemy, and, even at this moment, you hide your face that I may not see your palor."

Henry slowly undid the fastenings of his helmet, and placed it on a table. His face was indeed pale, but his eyes preserved a mild and humane serenity.

This calmness exasperated Don Pedro; he rose:—"Yes," he said, "I recognize the bastard of my father, he who called himself king of Castile, forgetting that he would be no king of Castile as long as I lived."

To the outrageous insults of his enemy, Henry attempted to oppose patience; but rage mounted by degrees to his forehead, and drops of cold sweat began to trickle down his face:—"Beware," he said, in a trembling voice, "you are here, with me, do not forget it; I do not insult you, and you dishonour your birth by words unworthy of us both."

"Bastard!" cried Don Pedro, "bastard! bastard!"

"Miserable! you will then unchain my fury?"

"Oh! I am very tranquil," said Don Pedro, approaching with sparkling eyes and livid lips; "you will not allow your rage to go farther than the care of your preservation demands; you are a coward."

"You lie!" vociferated Don Henry, beyond all restraint.

In reply, Don Pedro seized Henry by the throat, and Don Henry enclosed Don Pedro with his two arms:—"Ah!" said the vanquished king, "we wanted this battle; you will see that it shall be decisive." They struggled so furiously, that the tent was shaken, the roof oscillated; and, at the noise, the constable, the Bègue, and several officers, ran to it. To enter, they were obliged to cut with their swords through the curtains of the tent. The two enemies closed, enlaced like two serpents, held themselves fast to the very curtains, with their feet armed with spurs. They then observed fully the interior of the tent and the murderous struggle. The constable uttered a loud cry. A thousand soldiers fled immediately in the direction of the tent. It was then that Mothrill could see from the summit of the platform; it was then that Mauléon, also, began to see from the extremity of the entrenchment. The two adversaries rolled and wrestled, seeking, every time they had an arm free, to lay hold of a weapon. Don Pedro was the luckiest; he contrived to get Henry de Transtamara under him, and, retaining him with his knee, he drew from his belt a small dagger to strike him. But the danger gave strength to Henry; he once more threw back his brother, and held him by the loins. Entwined together, they breathed in the face of each other the devouring fire of their impotent hatred:—"We must finish it," exclaimed Don Pedro, finding that no one dared to touch them, so greatly did royal majesty, and the horror of the situation, prevail over the assistants: "to-day, no more king of Castile, but no more usurper; I cease to reign; but I am avenged; I shall be killed, but I shall have drank your blood;" and, with an unexpected vigour, he threw under him his brother, exhausted in the struggle, squeezed his throat, and raised his hand to bury his dagger



At this moment, Duguesclin, seeing him already marching with the point of his dagger in the coat of mail and cuirass, to find a defect, Duguesclin seized with his nervous hand the foot of Don Pedro, and tripped him up. The unhappy man rolled in his turn under Henry:—"I neither make nor unmake kings," said the constable, in a sullen and trembling voice; "I assist my seigneur."

Henry, enabled to breathe, had recovered strength, and drawn his cutlass. There was a flash; the steel plunged its whole length into the throat of Don Pedro, a gush of blood spouted to the eyes of the vanquisher, stifling the terrible cry that escaped from the lips of Don Pedro. The hand of the wounded man relaxed, his eye fell lustreless, and his forehead, contracted with a frown, fell back. His head was heard to strike heavily on the floor.

"Oh! what have you done?" said Agénor, who

had rushed into the tent, and regarded, with horror on end, the corpse in a sea of blood, and the vanquisher kneeling, his weapon in his right hand, whilst, with the left, he endeavoured to support himself.

A fearful silence reigned over the whole assembly. The fratricide king let fall his bloody poignard; they then saw a stream of blood issue from beneath the corpse, and glide gently along the slope of the rocky ground. Everyone recoiled before this blood, which still smoked, as if it had preserved the fire of hatred and of fury. Don Henry, being raised, seated himself in a corner of the tent, and hid his clouded face in his two hands; he could not support the light of day, and the regards of those present.

The constable, as gloomy as himself, but more energetic, gently raised him, and dismissed the spectators of this terrible scene:—"Certainly," he said, "it would have been better to have shed

this blood in battle, with your sword or your battle-axe; but God does his work in his own way, and what he has done is accomplished. Come, Sire, and take courage."

"'Twas he who resolved to die," murmured the king, "I went to pardon him; see that his remains be not long exposed to the regards—let an honourable interment—"

"Sire, trouble not yourself about all this—forget; let our work proceed."

The king retired in front of a line of soldiers, silent and amazed, and buried himself in another tent.

Duguesclin sent for the provost of the Bretons:—"You will cut off this head," he said, pointing to the body of Don Pedro, "and you, Bègue de Vilaines, will despatch it to Toledo. 'Tis the custom of the country, where, at least, usurpers, in the name of the dead, have no longer the right to come and trouble the reign and the repose of the living."

He had scarcely finished, when a Spaniard of the fortress came to say, on the part of the governor, that the garrison would lay down their arms at eight o'clock in the evening, according to the conditions offered by the herald of the constable.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE RESOLUTION OF THE MOOR.

THE whole of this scene, so rapid and so terrible, had been seen from the castle of Montiel, owing to the separation of the curtains of the tent, and the agitation of the principal actors. We have seen that, in the interview of Agénor and Mothril, the latter, whilst listening to the propositions of the herald, frequently looked towards the plain, where something appeared to attract his attention. Agénor endeavoured to make him believe that the Bretons were ignorant of the names of the fugitives of the night; he also made him believe that the fugitives had not been taken. This news assured Mothril as to the fate of Don Pedro, for the darkness of the night had prevented the people of the castle from observing the results of the evasion, and the Bretons had taken care to keep the profoundest silence on making the capture. Mothril then supposed Don Pedro in safety. He, therefore, commenced by disdaining the propositions of Mauleon; but, on looking towards the plain, he saw three horses roaming over the heath, and, no doubt, recognized amongst them, he whose eye was so certain, the piebald horse of Don Pedro, that noble animal which had brought his master from the field of battle to Montiel, and was to carry him like the lightning out of reach of his enemies.

The Bretons, in their joy, had seized the cavaliers, and forgotten the horses, which, finding themselves at liberty, and also frightened at the precipitation of the aggressors, had fled beyond the entrenchments and reached the country. During the rest of the night they had wandered, browsing and enjoying themselves; but at day-break, instinct, fidelity perhaps, had drawn them towards the castle; it was here that Mothril had noticed them. They had not taken the circular road by which they left; so that the ravine was between them and the castle, a ravine abrupt and deep, which had stopped them. Hidden by the projections of the rock, they regarded, from time to time, Montiel, then again set to grazing, in the ragged bits of ground, the mosses and

resinous madronios, whose berry resembles the strawberry by its colour and perfume.

When Mothril observed these animals, he turned pale, and conceived doubts as to Agénor's veracity. It was then he prepared to discuss the conditions, and to get his own life promised to him. Then, all at once, the scene of the tent appeared to him in all its horror. He recognised the golden lion of Henry de Transtamara, the red hair of Don Pedro, his energetic gesture and his vigour. He recognised his voice, when the last cry—the cry of death—escaped harsh and despairing from his mutilated throat. He would now have gladly retained Agénor as an hostage, or to tear him piece by piece; now he despaired. And now, too, seeing they were murdering Don Pedro, and knowing neither the cause or the consequence of the discussion, he said to himself that he was really lost, he, the instigator of the murdered king. From this moment he comprehended all the tactics of Agénor. The latter promised him life that he might be massacred on his leaving Montiel, and that he might have, freely and indefinitely, Aïssa.—"It is possible that I may die," said the Moor to himself; "at the same time I shall endeavour to live; but as to the young girl, cursed christian, you shall not have her, or you shall have her dead with me."

He agreed with Rodrigo to be silent respecting the death of Don Pedro, whom they alone had seen, and assembled the officers of Montiel. All were of opinion that they should surrender. Mothril in vain endeavoured to persuade these men that death was better than the discretion of the conquerors.

Rodrigo himself argued against his design. "They will punish Don Pedro," he said, "and some other great ones, perhaps; but we, whom they have spared in the combat—we, who are Spaniards, like Don Henry, why should they massacre us, when we have the word of the constable as a guarantee? We are neither Saracens nor Moors, and we worship the same God as our vanquishers."

Mothril saw plainly that all was finished. With the resignation of his compatriots, he bowed his head, and alone fixed his mind on an unchangeable, terrible resolution.

Rodrigo had it proclaimed that the garrison would immediately surrender. Mothril obtained that the capitulation should not take place till the evening. They submitted for a last time to his wishes. It was then that the herald came to Duguesclin to propose eight o'clock in the evening for the surrender of the place.

Mothril shut himself up in the apartments of the governor, to commence his prayers, he said to Rodrigo:—"You will," he said to him, "let the garrison leave at the hour agreed upon, that is at night; the soldiers first, then the sub-officers, then the officers and yourself, I shall leave the last with Donna Aïssa." Mothril, left alone, opened the door of Aïssa's room. "You see, my child," he said to her, "that all succeeds to our wishes, Don Pedro is not only gone, he is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed the young girl, with an expression of horror, which still contained a remnant of doubt.

"Stay," said Mothril, phlegmatically, "come and see."

"Oh!" murmured Aïssa, hesitating between fear and the desire of knowing the truth.

"Hesitate not, do not be thus imposed on, Aïssa; I wish you to see how the christians treat their enemies when vanquished and prisoners; these christians whom you love so!" He drew the

young girl from the room to the platform, and showed her the tent of Bègue de Vilaines with the body still extended. At the moment Aïssa, silent and pale, contemplated this frightful spectacle, a man was kneeling close to the body, and by a blow with a Breton knife, separated from it the head. Aïssa uttered a piercing cry, and fell almost fainting into the arms of Mothril. The latter carried her to her room, and knelt at the foot of the bed on which Aïssa reposed. "Child," he said, "you see—you know—the fate that has befallen Don Pedro awaits me. The christians have offered me a capitulation and my life; but they had also promised the life of Don Pedro. See how they keep their word! You are young and without experience; but your heart is pure, your mind upright; counsel me, I entreat you."

"I counsel you?"

"You know a christian, you——"

"And a christian," exclaimed Aïssa, "who will not forfeit his word, and who will save you because he loves me."

"You think so?" said Mothril, gloomily shaking his head.

"I am sure of it," added the young girl, with the enthusiasm of love.

"Child!" said Mothril, "what authority has he amongst his own? He is a simple knight, and he has over him captains, generals, a constable, a king. That he would pardon, I grant; but the others are implacable, they would kill us!"

"Me!" exclaimed the young girl with a movement of egotism she could not repress, and which showed to the Moor the inmost soul of Aïssa, that is, the extent of the danger, and the necessity of a prompt resolution.

"No," he said, "you are a young girl, handsome, and desirable. These captains, these generals, this constable, this king, would pardon you in the hope of meriting a smile, or a recompense still more flattering. Oh! the French and Spaniards are gallant!" he added, with a funereal smile. "But me! me! I am but a man dangerous to them; they will sacrifice me."

"I tell you that Agénor is there, that he will defend my honour at the expense of his life."

"And if he died, what would become of you?"

"I have death as a refuge."

"Oh! I face death with less resignation than you, Aïssa, because I am nearer to it."

"I swear to you I will save you."

"On what do you swear to me?"

"On my life! Besides, you deceive yourself, I repeat, Mothril, as to the influence possessed by Agénor. The king loves him; he is a good *serviteur* of the constable; he has had an important mission confided to him, you know, at Soria."

"Yes, and you know it also, Aïssa, as it appears," said the Moor, with a look full of a sombre jealousy.

Aïssa blushed with modesty and fear, remembering that Soria was for her a name of love and ineffable delights. She then continued:—"My knight will save us both. I will make him, if necessary enter into this condition."

"Listen to me, then, child!" exclaimed the Moor, impatient at seeing this amorous obstinacy embarrass every step of the road he wished to rush into; "Agénor is so little capable of saving us that he came here just now——"

"He came?" said Aïssa, "here? you did not apprise me?"

"To open all eyes as to your love! You forget your dignity, young girl. He came, I say, to entreat me to find a means of withdrawing you from

the outrages of the christians. At this price he promised to defend me."

"Outrages to me! to me who will make myself a christian!"

Mothril uttered a cry of rage, immediately repressed by imperious necessity.—"How shall I act?" continued Mothril; "advise me, time presses. To-night the place will be delivered to the christians; to-night I shall die, and you will belong, as a part of the booty, to the chiefs of the infidels."

"What did Agénor say, then?"

"He proposed a terrible means, which will prove to you how great is the danger."

"A means of safety?"

"A means of escape."

"Speak!"

"Look out of this window. You see that on this side the rock of Montiel rises perpendicularly, is impracticable, and descends to the bottom of the ravine in such a way, that surveillance on this point would be superfluous, for the birds alone by flying, and the snakes by crawling, could descend or mount along the rocks. Besides, since they no longer watch for Don Pedro, the French have entirely abandoned this point."

Aïssa plunged her regards with terror into the gulf already tinged with black by the approach of night. "Well!" she said.

"Well! the Frank has advised me to attach a rope to the bars of this grating, to let it hang in the ravine—as we wished to have done for Don Pedro, and as he would have done if he had not required a horse below—he counselled me to attach myself, with you in my arms, to the knots of this rope, and to reach the ravine, whilst the army of christians is occupied at the doors of the castle in relieving the garrison, who will defile without arms about eight o'clock in the evening."

Aïssa, her eye on fire, her lips trembling, listened to the Moor, and went a second time to contemplate the yawning chasm. "'Tis he who has given this counsel," she said.

"'When you have descended,' he added," continued Mothril, "'you will find me awaiting you; I will facilitate your means of escape.'"

"What! He will abandon us? he will leave me alone with you?"

Mothril turned pale. "No," he said. "Do you see the three horses who are browsing on the other side of the ravine?"

"Yes, yes! I see them."

"The Frank has already kept half his promise. He has sent these horses to await us. Count them, Aïssa—there are three."

"How shall we fly, then? Oh! yes, yes!" she exclaimed, "you me—him. Oh! Mothril! oh! to fly with him, I would enter a gulf of fire! Let us go."

"You will not be afraid?"

"Since he waits for me!"

"Hold yourself in readiness, then, the moment the drums and trumpets announce the garrison to be in movement."

"The rope——"

"The rope is here. It would support a weight three times heavier than ours; and as to its length, I have measured it by dropping a leaden ball at the end of a string into the ravine. You will be courageous and strong, Aïssa?"

"As though I went with my knight to my wedding," replied the young girl, overcome with joy.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE HEAD AND THE HAND.

NIGHT fell upon Montiel; a night, sombre and cold, which enveloped in its humid winding sheet, forms and colours. At half past eight the trumpet gave the signal, and the flambeaus, were seen to descend in a procession the steep and rocky path which led to the principal door. The soldiers, the officers, appeared one by one, making their submission, and received benevolently by the constable and the christian captains, who, parading near the retrenchment, watched the *sortie* of men and baggage.

Suddenly an idea occurred to Musaron; he approached his master, and said to him:—"This cursed Moor has treasures; he is capable of throwing them into some precipice that we might not profit by them. I will make the tour of the place, for I see as clear at nights as the cats, and take no great pleasure in seeing defile these Spanish prisoners."

"Go," said Agénor; "there is a treasure which Mothril will not throw into a precipice, and which is my own dearest treasure! This one I shall watch for at the door, and I shall take it the moment it presents itself."

"Eh! eh!" said, with an air of gloomy doubt, Musaron, who glided into the brushwood of the *fossé* and disappeared.

The soldiers were still defiling, the cavalry came next; two hundred horses take some time to descend one by one paths like that of Montiel.

Impatience devoured the heart of Mauléon. A fatal presentiment flashed across his brain like a sharp pointed steel. "Fool that I am," he said to himself; "Mothril has my word; he knows that his life is safe; he knows that the slightest misfortune happening to this young girl would expose him to the most horrible torments. Then Aïssa, who must have seen my banner, will have taken her precautions—she will appear—I shall see her—I was mad——"

Suddenly the hand of Musaron rested on the shoulder of Agénor:—"Sir," he said to him quietly, "come quick!"

"What's the matter? how agitated you are?"

"Sir, come, in heaven's name! What I had foreseen comes to pass. The Moor is removing—through a window!"

"Eh! what's that to me?"

"I am afraid it concerns you much—the objects they let down appear to me like living objects."

"We must give the alarm!"

"Not for your life! The Moor, if 'tis him, will defend himself, he will kill some one; so diers are brutal, they are not amorous, they will spare nothing. Let us do our work ourselves."

"You are mad, Musaron; you would for a few miserable coffers let me lose the first regard of Aïssa."

"I will go alone," said Musaron, impatient; "if I am killed, it will be your fault."

"Agénor made no reply. He separated himself without affectation from the group of officers, and reached the entrenchment.

"Quick, quick!" cried the squire to him; "let us try to arrive in time."

Agénor doubled his pace, but nothing was more difficult than a race through these briars, shrubs, and roots.

"Do you see?" said Musaron, showing to his master a white form which glided along the black wall at the base of the ravine.

Agénor uttered a cry.

"Is it you, Agénor?" replied a gentle voice.

"Well, sir! what do you say to it?" enquired Musaron.

"Oh!" cried Mauléon, "run quick to the edge of the ravine; surprise them!"

"Agénor!" repeated the voice of Aïssa, upon whom Mothril attempted to force silence by strong exhortations made in a low tone.

"Let us lie down, sir, in the ditch; let us not speak, or show ourselves!"

"But they are flying that way!"

"Oh! we can easily overtake a young girl, especially when this young only asks to be overtaken. Let us lie down, I say, my dear master."

Mothril, however, had listened as the tiger listens on leaving his cavern, or when he holds the prey between his teeth. He heard no more, took courage, and climbed with a nimble step the shelving of the steep *fossé*; with one hand he held Aïssa and drew her up; with the other he clung to the trees and roots. He reached the summit and took breath.

Agénor now rose and cried:—"Aïssa! Aïssa!"

"I was sure it was him," replied the young girl.

"The christian!" hurled Mothril with rage.

"But Agénor is there! let us go that way," said Aïssa, struggling to disengage herself from Mothril's arms, to run to her lover.

The only reply of Mothril, was to hold her more firmly, and draw her towards the spot where he had seen the horse of Don Pedro.

Agénor ran, but stumbled at every step, and Mothril gained ground and approached one of the horses.

"This way! this way!" still cried Aïssa, "come, Mauléon, come!"

"If you speak a word, you are dead!" whispered Mothril, in her ear. Would you attract all the world here by your stupid cries? Would you that your lover may no longer find us?"

Aïssa was silent, Mothril found the horse, seized it by the mane, jumped into the saddle, threw the young girl in front of him, and started at a gallop. It was the horse of one of the officers taken with Don Pedro.

Mauléon heard the gallop of the horse, and uttered a groan of rage:—"He flies! he flies! Aïssa! Aïssa! answer!"

"I am here! I am here!" said the young girl; and her voice was lost in the thickness of the veil which Mothril pressed on the lips of Aïssa at the risk of smothering her.

Agénor finished a desperate course, he fell on his knees, exhausted and breathless.

"Oh! God is not just," he murmured.

"Sir! sir! here is a horse," cried Musaron, "courage, come, I am holding it."

Agénor bounded with joy, he recovered his strength, and placed his foot in the stirrup held for him by Musaron. He started like lightning in the track of Mothril. His horse was that admirable courser with the fiery spots, that had not its equal in Andalusia; so that, devouring space, Agénor approached Mothril, and cried to Aïssa:—"Courage! I am here."

Mothril ploughed with a poignard, the flanks of his horse, who neighed with pain.

"Yield her to me! I will not harm you," said Agénor, to the Moor; "yield her to me! by the living God, I will let you fly."

The Moor replied by a contemptuous laugh.

"Aïssa! Aïssa! glide from his arms, Aïssa!"

The young girl was suffocating, and uttered

cries of despair under the robust arm that stifled her. At length, Mothril felt on his back the burning breath of Don Pedro's horse; Agénor seized the robe of his mistress and drew it forcibly towards him:—"Yield her to me," he said to the Saracen, "or I kill you!"

"Loose her, christian, or you are dead!"

Agénor rolled his hand in the white robe, and raised his sword against Mothril; the latter, with a blow of his poignard, launched obliquely, felled the left hand of Agénor. The hand remained clinging to the robe, and Agénor uttered a cry so piercing, that Musaron heard it at a distance, and howled with rage.

Mothril thought he could now fly; but it was no longer Agénor who pursued, it was the animated race horse; besides, rage had doubled the force of the young man; his sword was once more raised, and if Mothril had not made his horse bound on one side, there would have been an end of him.

"Yield her, Saracen," said Agénor, in a failing voice, "you see plainly that I shall kill you. Yield her to me; I love her!"

"And I also love her!" replied Mothril, again pricking his horse.

A voice, that of Musaron, penetrated the darkness. The honest squire had found the third horse; he had cut across the briars and stones, and came to the assistance of his master.

"Here I am! courage, sir!" he cried.

Mothril turned round and saw he was lost:—"You desire this young girl?" he said.

"Yes, I wish to have her, and I will have her!"

"Well! take her then."

The name of Agénor, followed by a stifled rattle, issued from beneath the veil, and something heavy rolled under Agénor's horse, with the white scarf and long waving folds. Mauléon threw himself off to seize what Mothril had abandoned—he knelt to kiss the veil that enclosed his mistress; but the moment he saw, he remained fixed, inanimate. When daybreak threw its pale light on this horrible scene, the chevalier was seen livid as a spectre, his lips glued to the cold and leaden coloured lips of a head that Mothril had thrown to him. Within three steps, wept Musaron; the faithful follower had found means of dressing the stump of his master during his long swoon, he had saved him despite himself. At thirty paces lay Mothril, the temples traversed by the sure and deadly arrow of the brave squire, and still holding in his arm the mutilated body of Aïssa. Dead, he smiled in his triumph. Two horses wandered here and there amongst the herbage.

EPILOGUE.

THE worthy knight with the iron hand had deceived himself in assigning a duration of eight days to the recital of his exploits and his misfortunes. In fact, he was one of those who recite quickly, because they have a flowing speech and picturesque language; and as to his auditory, never was there seen a more intelligent or more sensible one round a passionate narrator. Every one present followed by a pantomime, equivalent to the recital of the chevalier, all the emotions he showed in his simple and energetic language.

Jehan Froissard, with eyes sparkling or humid, devoured every word; he appeared to represent to himself the sites, the skies, the acts, and all things comprised reflected themselves in his intelligent regards.

Messire Espaing, started at the narration of

battles, as though he heard the clarions of Spain, or the trumpets of the Moors.

Alone, in the most obscure corner of the chamber, the squire of the knight discourser preserved silence and immobility. His head resting on his bosom, as so many remembrances, coloured by the description of his master, defiled before him, he drew himself up at moments, when they recounted one of his prowesses, or if the chevalier became so animated as to make them fear a return of pain. Eleven hours, the long hours of the night, thus slipped away, or rather fled like sparks of the log fire that warmed the room, like the smoke of the lamps and wax lights above the heads of the auditors. Towards the conclusion of the history, hearts were oppressed, eyes were humid.

The voice of the Chevalier de Mauléon, visibly distressed, faltered at every word, and stopped at every emotion, as does the chisel of the inspired artist.

Musaron fixed upon him a soft and melancholy regard, and with that familiarity which reminds one more of the friend than the follower, he placed a hand on his shoulder:—"There, there, seigneur," he said, "enough, enough for the present."

"Oh!" murmured the knight, "this cinder is not yet cold; it burns on being moved."

Two large tears rolled down the cheeks of the chronicler—tears of compassion and interest, no doubt, but which a wicked spirit, he who always endeavours to slander the best intentions of chroniclers and romancers, has since attributed to joy, at having heard so noble a narrative made by the hero of the adventures.

When the history was terminated, the sun already shone upon the roof of the hostelry and the growing forests. Jehan Froissard could then see the figure of the chevalier, and this figure merited all the attention of a man who studies men. In his noble and intelligible forehead, thought or trouble had furrowed a deep wrinkle. Already there extended from the corner of the eyes those diverging lines or network, which seem like threads intended to draw the eyelid, as if to close it violently before death. The regard of the bastard sought neither for applause nor consolation from his auditors.

"What a touching history!" said Froissard; "what a fine picture! the rich virtue!"

"In the tomb, in the tomb, all that, master," replied the chevalier, "all that is now dead. Donna Aïssa, that cherished head, is not the only one I have to mourn; all my amours, all my friendships, have not chosen the same field to bury themselves. When this one," said the knight, indicating, by a tender regard, his squire, leaning on the back of his chair, "when this one, who is, alas! older than I am, shall have closed his eyes, I shall not have a soul upon earth, and, holy God, I shall love no one again; my heart is dead, Sire Jehan Froissard, from having lived too much in so short a time."

"But, thank God!" interrupted Musaron, with an effort to render free and joyful his voice, which was stifled with emotion, "thank God, I find myself charming; my arm is strong, my eye steady; I send an arrow as far as formerly, and riding not in the least fatigues me."

"Sire Chevalier," interrupted Froissard, "you will allow my unworthy pen, then, to retrace the noble deeds, and the tender misfortunes, which I have learnt from your mouth? 'Tis a great honour you do me, 'tis a sweet and bitter joy."

Mauléon inclined.

"But for the love of Jesus, good knight,"

tinued Froissard, "do not despair; you are still young, you are handsome you ought to have as much of this world's goods, as becomes a noble man and a noble heart; friends are never wanting to brave men."

The chevalier mournfully shook his head, Musaron made a movement of his shoulders, which would have caused a jealousy to the stoic, Epic-teta, or the sceptic, Phyrrho.

"When we have been noted in the army by our bravery," continued Froissard, "in the councils of princes by our wisdom; when we are both the arm that executes roughly, and the mind that conceives safely, we are sought for; we do not approach the court, without feeling its graces; and you, Seigneur de Mauléon, have two courts that protect you, and dispute the pleasure of making you rich and powerful. Has Spain the preference over France? Have you preferred the ultra-montaine county to a barony in your own country?"

"Sire Froissard," replied Mauléon, with much calmness and a deep sigh, "it was a very great mourning that covered France, on the 13th day of July, 1380! On that day, a spirit fled to its creator; a soul, the noblest and most generous that has ever appeared in the world. Alas! Sire Jehan Froissard, it lightly touched my bosom in its flight, for I held in my arms, and kneeling, the head of the valiant constable, and this head, stiffened on my breast."

"Alas!" said Froissard.

"Alas!" repeated Espaing, piously crossing himself, whilst Musaron knit his brows, that he might not be too sensibly affected at this remembrance.

"Yes, messire, once, the constable, Bertrand Duguesclin, dead at Castleneuve de Randon; dead! he who appeared the god of battles, once, the army, without chief and without guide, I felt myself decay; I had placed much of my life on his, messire, and attached the fibres of my heart in such a way, that they held by his."

"You have still the good King Charles the Wise, Sire Chevalier."

"I had to mourn his death, at the moment I wept for that of the constable; from this double blow, I did not rise. I hung the sword and shield to the rafters of my little mansion, left me by my uncle; I there buried for four years my grief and my remembrances. Yet a new reign made France young again; I saw pass, at times, gay chevaliers, and I listened to the songs of the minstrels; oh! messire, how they struck my heart, these troubadours, who passed the Pyrenees singing, in a sad and melancholy air, those Spanish lines of the ballad, written on Blanche de Bourbon and Don Frederic, the grand master:—

"El rey no me ha contado
Con las virgines, mi roz.
Castilla, di que te hize!"

"What! seigneur, all this did not draw you to the court of Spain, of the King Don Henry, who reigned so gloriously, and who loved you so sincerely?"

"Seigneur chronicler, the moment arrived when my poor head, on fire, dreamt of nothing but Spain. Of all my past exploits, I had preserved so dark, so sad a remembrance, that I could only attribute it to the consequences of a dream. In reality, my life seemed to me to have been divided by a long sleep, and but for Musaron, who at times said to me:—'Yes, seigneur, yes, we have seen all that these men sing,' without Musaron, I say, I should have believed in magic.

Every night I dreamt of Spain; I again saw Toledo and Montiel, the grotto in which we beheld Hafiz die, where Caverley came to seat himself. I saw Burgos and the splendours of the court; Soria! Soria! seigneur, and the extacies of love. My life was consumed in desires, in repugnances—it was torpor, it was fever. One day the trumpets passed, ringing through the country. They were the battles of Monseigneur Louis de Bourbon, who was repairing to Spain to the court of the good King Henry, who feared being vanquished in the war with Portugal, and had solicited the aid of France. The Duke of Bourbon had heard of a knight who had fought in the wars of Spain, and who knew many secret things of the expedition of the companies. I saw enter my house pages and knights, who filled my little court and greatly astonished my retainers. I was at the window and had but the time to descend to hold the stirrup of the prince. The latter, then, with much courtesy, questioned me as to my wounds and adventures, he wished to hear narrated the death of Don Pedro, my combat with the Moor; but I kept from him all that concerned Donna Aïssa. Enraptured, the duke begged me, entreated me, even, to accompany him; I was in one of those moments of hallucination in which my life appeared to me as a dream, and then I wished to know, I burned to see once more. Moreover, the trumpets intoxicated me, and Musaron here looked at me with eyes of envy; he already held his arbalette in his hand.

"Come! Mauléon, come!" said the prince."

"So be it, monseigneur," I replied. "To a certainty the King of Spain will be glad to see me again."

"We departed, shall I say it, almost joyful; I was about then to bow myself on that soil which had drank my blood and that of my best beloved. Oh! messieurs, memory is a noble gift: many men only know what it is to live but once, with much difficulty; others perpetually recommence the days they have already lost. A fortnight after our departure we were at Burgos, and in another fortnight at Segovia with the court. I found the King Don Henry looking much older, but still upright and majestic. I knew not how to explain the secret repugnance I felt towards him, towards him I had so much loved when the days of golden fancies made him appear to me noble and unfortunate, that is perfect. On seeing him again I read cruelty and dissimulation in his face. 'Alas!' I said to myself, 'tis the crown, then, that thus changes the features and the mind.' It was not the crown that had changed Henry, 'twas my sight which knew how to read through the shadows of the crown! The first thing which the king showed to the duke at Segovia, in the tower, was an iron cage, in which were shut up the sons of Don Pedro and of Maria de Padilla. Unfortunates, who grew up pale and hungry in the narrow enclosure of these bars, constantly threatened with the lance of a sentinel, constantly insulted by the ferocious smile of a guardian or a visitor. One of these children, messeigneurs, resembled, like a faithful portrait, his unhappy father. He fixed on me looks that pierced my heart, as if the soul of Don Pedro had taken refuge in his body, and knowing all, had silently addressed to me the reproach of his death, and the misfortune of his race. This child, or rather this young man, knew nothing, however, nor did he know me; he regarded me without an object, unintentionally, but my conscience spoke, as that of Don Henry was silent. In fact, the

prince, taking the Duke of Bourbon by the hand, drew him near the cage, saying to him:—"See there, the children of him who killed your sister. If you wish that they should die, I will deliver them to you."

"To which the duke replied:—"Sire, the children are not guilty of their father's crimes." I saw the king frown and order the cage to be shut. I would willingly have embraced the brave duke. Thus, when, after the promenade, monseigneur wished to present me to the king, who had also regarded me with attention:—"No! no!" I replied, "no!" I could not speak to him; but the king had recognised me. He came to me before the whole court, saluting me by my name, which, under other circumstances, would have made me weep with joy and pride.

"Sire Chevalier" he said, "I have a promise to keep towards you; recall it to me."

"No, indeed, sire," I faltered out, "nothing."

"But, to-morrow I will speak to you!" replied the king, with a gracious smile, which did not make me forget his cruel treatment of the infant prisoners.

"But I did not wait for this day of to-morrow. With the leave of the duke I departed immediately for France, and only sojourned in Spain a quarter of an hour to offer up my prayers on the tomb of Donna Aïssa, near the chateau of Montiel. Poor

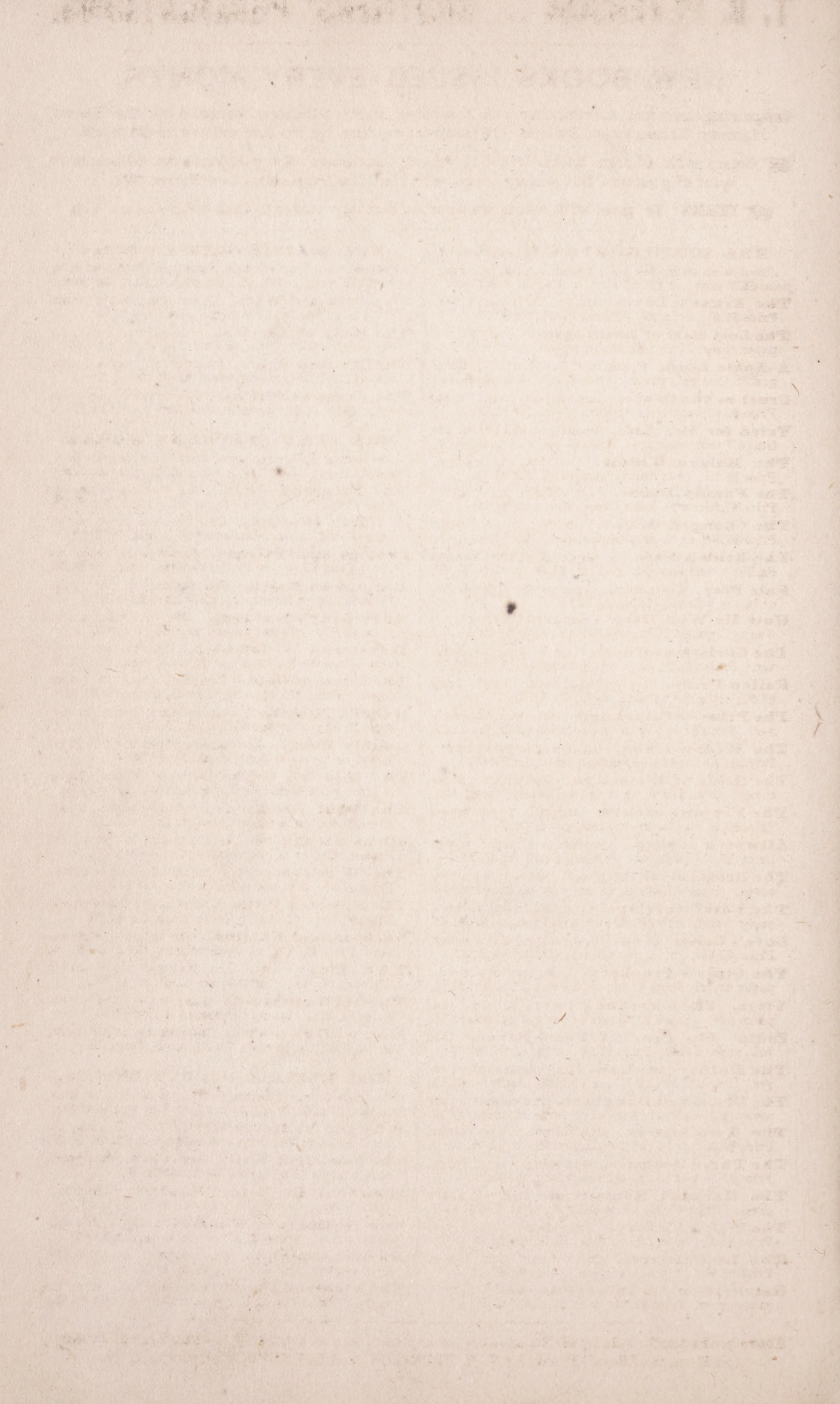
we departed, this brave Musaron and myself; poor we returned when others returned very rich. You have now the termination of the history, Sire Chronicler. Add to it that I patiently await death; it will re-unite me to my friends. I have just made my annual pilgrimage to the tomb of my uncle, and I return to my house. If you pass that way, messieurs, you will be well received, and do me honour. 'Tis a small castle built with brick and flint; it has two towers, and a wood overlooks it; any one in the neighbourhood will point it out to you." This said, Agénor de Mauléon courteously saluted Jehan Froissard and Espaing, demanded his horse, and slowly and tranquilly took the road to his house, followed by Musaron, who had defrayed the expenses.

"Ah!" said Espaing, regarding him on his road, "the fine opportunities these men of former times have had; the gay time, the noble hearts!"

"It will take me a week to write all this," said Froissard to himself; "the good chevalier was right—and then, shall I write as well as he has narrated?"

Some time afterwards the two children of Don Pedro and Maria de Padilla, handsome as their mother, proud as their father, died in the cage of Segovia. Henry of Transtamara, however, reigned happily, and founded a dynasty.

THE END.



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
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